

# **BANDWAGON**

**THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.**

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2000





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### THE FRONT COVER

Poodles Hanneford and the Hanneford Family was a feature of the Sells-Floto Circus in 1927 when this poster was used.

This lithograph, as well as others used by Hagenbeck-Wallace and John Robinson in the 1920s were ordered by the American Circus Corporation from the Strobridge Lithograph Co.

The poster on the cover is from the Cincinnati Museum of Art collection.

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### CORRECTION

The report of the CHS trustee meeting in Normal, Illinois in the September-October 2000 *Bandwagon* failed to note that trustee Fred Dahlinger was present.

### CONTRIBUTIONS RECEIVED

During the year of 2000 a number of Circus Historical Society members made tax deductible contributions to the organization's endowment fund.

Four members contributed \$1,000 each.

Fifteen people contributed \$75; one contributed \$70; eighteen contributed \$35 and sixty-four contributed \$15. Twenty-one people con-

tributed \$2 to \$25. The CHS has been designated by the Internal Revenue Service as a not-for-profit organization.

### SEASON'S REVIEW HELP

Work will soon begin on the 2000 Circus Year in Review. The editor is in need of information, newspaper ads and photographs on circuses that toured in 2000.

Information on small shows and those from Mexico is needed. We especially want material on Walker Bros., Circus Pages, Circus Flora, Swan Bros., Happytime Circus, Star Bros., Hendricks Bros., Cirque Ingenieux, Circus Europa Zoppe, Circus Hope, Plunkett Bros., Sterling and Reid Bros., Circus Valentine, and Circo Mundial.

Information on animal rights activity as well as any other problems affecting circuses will be appreciated. Send material to the editor.

### BACK ISSUES OF BANDWAGON

1966-Jan.-Feb.  
1967-July-Aug., Nov.-Dec.  
1968-All but Jan.-Feb.  
1969-July-Aug., Sept.-Oct.  
1970-All but July-Aug., Sept.-Oct.  
1971-All but Mar.-Ap., May-June.  
1972-All available.  
1973-All but Nov.-Dec.  
1974-All but Mar.-Ap., May-June.  
1975-All available.  
1976-All but Jan.-Feb., Nov.-Dec.  
1977-All but Mar.-Ap.  
1978-All available.  
1979-All but Jan.-Feb.  
1980-1986-All available.  
1987-All but Nov.-Dec.  
1988-2000-All available.

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**BANDWAGON BACK ISSUES**  
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# SEASONS

## GREETINGS



Ringling Bros. Lion Tableau Restored 2000



[www.circusworldmuseum.com](http://www.circusworldmuseum.com) & [www.circusparade.com](http://www.circusparade.com)  
Great Circus Parade - Milwaukee, WI - Sunday, July 15, 2001



# The Circus Year In Review

## THE SEASON OF 1900

By Fred D. Pfening, Jr.

The end of the nineteenth century was a turning point in the growth and expansion of the United States. With the end of the Civil War thirty years past, giant strides were being made in many areas in spite of the problems of the depression from 1892 to 1897.

With the depression ending it was full speed ahead for the 76,000,000 citizens of America. Three fifths lived in the North Atlantic and North Central areas of the country, a fertile section for circuses.

One of the most significant advances was the interconnection of the multitude of small, short-line railroads. This created more territory for both large and small railroad circuses.

The expanded rail system allowed the giant shows to play small magnate communities, drawing from surrounding towns by way of special excursion trains.

The economy was right and showmen were ready to take advantage of what was being offered.

The May 1, 1900 *Billboard* stated there were 63 railroad shows, 165 wagon shows, five wild west shows and fourteen dog and pony outfits on tour. Research suggests that the numbers were highly inflated, although there were a huge number of sawdust operas on the road in 1900. The listing of circuses by C. G. Sturtevant, which appeared in *White Tops* in the early 1960s, noted only 77 shows, probably a low number as he showed 92 in 1899 and 87 in 1901.

At the beginning of the 20th century the big holidays for much of the country were Thanksgiving, Christmas, the 4th of July and circus day. Circus fans were overwhelmed with the opportunities available to them. The sawdust outfits were aplenty across

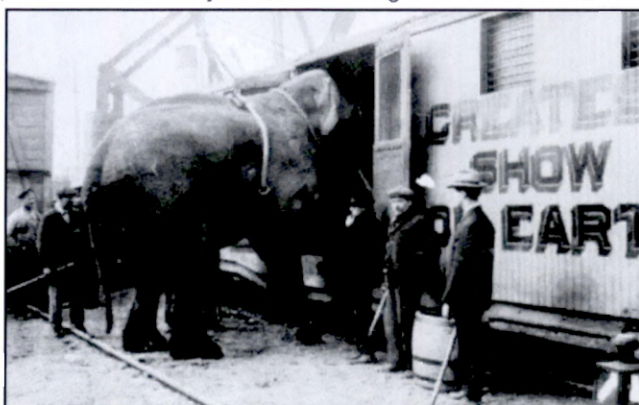
America. From giant railroad circuses to three and five cars outfits to a scores of wagon shows, the country was covered.

Tented shows consumed thousands of sheets of pictorial lithographs. Many printing companies, competing for circus business, advertised in the *New York Clipper* and the *Billboard*. The hub of show printing was Cincinnati where Strobridge, Heengan, Cincinnati Poster, and Russell-Morgan were located. The Donaldson Lithograph Company was located across the Ohio River in Newport, Kentucky. Others lithographers were Calhoun Litho in New York City; Buffalo Courier Company, Buffalo; Erie Litho, Erie, Pennsylvania; W. J. Morgan & Company, Cleveland; National Printing and Engraving, Chicago; and Great Western, St. Louis.

Colorful lithographs were the principal advertising medium for shows of all sizes. Half, one and two sheet lithographs, called window work, were hung in store windows.

A large amount of multi-sheet paper was posted on fences, buildings and in some cases specially erected billboards. Enormous bill stands were not uncommon. The big stuff

Loading a Barnum elephant in Germany in 1900. Pfening Archives.



was called wall work. The Forepaugh-Sells show used 36 sheet bills from Courier, Strobridge and Donaldson in 1900. The giant posters were topped off with large date paper.

The big news at the first of the year was the auction of the Walter L. Main Circus in Geneva, Ohio on January 24. The sale drew circus owners from far and wide. The January 24 *New York Clipper* reported on the auction. Wardrobe was sold to Sig Sautelle and the Smith brothers. Baggage stock went to the British army in South Africa. C. G. Phillips, an Uncle Tom's Cabin operator, bought a sleeper, lights and seats for his No. 2 show. Forepaugh-Sells picked up two trained mules and some camels. The Welsh brothers bought rail cars and cages. Carnival man Frank Bostock went away with cages and animals.

The biggest buyers were Rhoda Royal and Joseph Barris who planned to tour the Great Rhoda Royal Australian Railroad Shows, in April. They bought (or leased) baggage stock, tableau cages, a pony acts, two trained mules, harness and a number of baggage wagons.

Other circus carnival notables at the auction were the Sun brothers, Otto and John Ringling, W. H. Harris, John G. Robinson, Frank Gaskill, C.

W. Sipe, Albert Whitler, B. E. Wallace, W. W. Cole, W. E. Franklin, J. Augustus Jones and the Lemen brothers.

Carl Hagenbeck held an animal auction in Cincinnati, Ohio on March 22. The animals were boarded at the Cincinnati Zoo.

The Barnum & Bailey Greatest Show on Earth was in Germany in the fourth year of a five year tour of Great Britain and Europe.



Germany was the first European country visited by the show. New fireproof canvas was brought from the United States that conformed to German regulations. Two new light plant wagons were built in England. The show was placed on the ship *Michigan* for the trip to Hamburg, Germany. A parade was given on April 14 and the circus opened in Hamburg on April 15 where it played until May 13. The show next appeared in Berlin from May 14 until June 10. One and multiple days dates were played in Germany until it closed in Passau on November 10. The Vienna, Austria season opened on November 25 and lasted until February 24, 1901.

The performance was presented in three rings and two stages. Some new acts appeared in the 1900 show. The show included three rings of elephants worked by George Conklin, William Newman and George Bates; lady riders Anette Feeleyn, Rose Wentworth and Carrie Daniels; gentlemen riders Claude Powell, William Wallet and Fred Derrick; the Silbons, Seigrists-Silbon and Meteors flying acts. The final displays were hippodrome races.

The show moved in four sections of sixty foot cars. Train one had 12 flats, 3 elephant cars and one lead stock car. Train two had 7 flats, 8 stocks and 1 pony car. Train three had 6 flats, 8 stocks and 3 sleepers. Train four had 10 flats, 5 sleepers, a camel car and a baggage car. One advertising car was in advance. The sixty-seven cars were built for the show in England to move on the European gauge rail lines.

The Adam Forepaugh & Sells Bros. Circus, perhaps the largest show on tour in America, returned to New York City for the third year to play the Madison Square Garden date, a Barnum & Bailey stand when it was in this country. The show was owned by Lewis Sells, James A. Bailey and W. W. Cole. Lewis Sells was the general manager. Peter Sells had sold his interest to brother Lewis. Mike Coyle was general agent. Forepaugh-Sells probably traveled on at least sixty cars including three advance advertising cars. The big top was a 180 round with four 60 foot middles using 50 foot long center poles. The

menagerie was a 100 footer with four 50 foot middles. The side show tent was a 70 with two 40s.

The circus advertised in the March 24 *Clipper* wanting additional novelty acts for the New York date only. A number of additional acts were used in the Garden. A special program was distributed listing the acts for the New York engagement.

Forepaugh-Sells' winter quarters, called Sellsville, it was located next to the Olentangy River on the outskirts of Columbus, Ohio, next to the rightaway of the Columbus, Hocking Valley and Toledo railroad. A large spur off the railroad allowed the parking of all the cars, and a large 400 by 50 foot shed provided space for the rebuilding as well as the usual repairing and repainting of the train. Another shop provided space for harness makers. The wagon shop was 200 by 75 feet and was completely outfitted with a blacksmith department. The wagons were brought from the storage sheds to this building for repair work during the winter. The paint shop was near by. Over fifty men lived in Sellsville and were fed three meals a day in the dining hall. A ring barn and animal building was divided in two sections. One part was used as a stable for the performing stock and the other as a training ring. A heated building served as the wild animal quarters. Twenty-two permanent dens provided space for the caged animals. A pond of water was part of the hippo cage. The elephants and other lead stock were kept in this building.

Forepaugh-Sells left the winter quarters on March 27 for New York. A watering stop was made in Altoona, Pennsylvania. A parade was given in Manhattan on April 2 with the first performance on April 4. The show closed in New York on April 21. Frank J. Melville was equestrian director and William N. Merrick was musical director. Bill Emery was superintendent of elephants.

All went well as the outfit was leaving the Garden except for the elephants. It was noticed that Dick was not in the group. It seemed that Dick had fallen in love with the Garden and was not inclined to leave. He was petted, coaxed and beaten in an effort to get him to leave, but he died



This Courier Company litho was used by Forepaugh-Sells in 1900. Library of Congress.

rather than leave. Dick's remains were turned over to a taxidermist to be stuffed for exhibition purposes.

Moving in three sections the under-canvas tour began in Baltimore April 23 to 24. A billing war occurred in Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania before the May 9 stand. The opposition brigade of the Great Wallace show covered much of the Forepaugh-Sells paper.

The show played Hartford, Connecticut on May 15. Two weeks after the Ringling show. Boston was played from May 20 to 26. Several persons and a sleeper had a narrow escape from a wreck shortly before the train arrived in Boston. The car was run into by a switch engine just before it arrived, badly smashing the platform of the sleeper causing several occupants to jump for safety. During the stand a polar bear escaped from its cage and strolled about the menagerie tent, but was quickly returned to its cage.

Sheldon H. Barrett, a brother-in-law to Peter Sells and general agent of the show, died in Boston on May 16 from complications of typhoid fever and pneumonia. He had been a long-time associate and manager with the show.

By July 2 the Forepaugh-Sells Circus was in Marshalltown, Iowa. On July 13 in Fargo, North Dakota



the show was unable to put up the big top because of high winds. The cages were corralled and the performance was given in the menagerie top. A camel died that day.

In August it was in Nebraska, Kansas, and Missouri. In Cameron, Missouri on August 21 a heavy wind blew down the tents just as the doors were to open for the matinee, with several people being injured and the day lost. In Lexington, Missouri on August 29 a flat car jumped the track, throwing two wagons off the train. On August 15 a fire destroyed two winter quarters buildings with a loss of \$12,500.

In September the show played in Illinois, Tennessee, Alabama and Kentucky. In October it was in Georgia, Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina. The circus closed on November 3 in Aberdeen, Mississippi. Lewis Sells advertised fifteen cages for sale that month.

The Buffalo Bill Wild West and Congress of Rough Riders of the World opened in Madison Square Garden three days after Forepaugh-Sells closed there. The engagement lasted through May 5. The first parade was given on April 23.

William F. Cody was president and Nate Salsbury was vice-president and manager. John M. Burke was general manager and Johnny Baker was arena director. James A. Bailey and W. W. Cole were tour directors and Louis E. Cooke was general agent.

The performance was: 1. Overture by William Sweeney's cowboy band. 2. Grand review by the full company. 3. Annie Oakley. 4. Race of races with a cowboy, a Cossack, a Mexican, an Arab, a Gaucho and an Indian. 5. U. S. Army artillery drill. 6. The attack of by Indians on a prairie wagon train, repulsed by Buffalo Bill. 7. The pony express. 8. A group of Mexicans illustrating the lasso and horsemanship. 9. The battle of San Juan Hill with detachments from Roosevelt's rough riders, the infantry, Cuban scouts and a pack train. 10. A group of Arab horsemen. 11. Johnny Baker, celebrated American marksman. 12. Cossacks from

Russia. 13. Relay races. 14. Cowboy fun, lassoing wild horses, and bucking horses. 15. Indians from three tribes. 16. Military musical drill with Irish lancers, German riders and the U. S. cavalry. 17. Veterans from the Sixth U. S. cavalry. 18. Attack on the Deadwood mail coach by Indians. 19. Racing by Indian boys on bareback horses. 20. Three minutes with the Rough Riders of the World. 21. Col. W. F. Cody, sharp-shooting while riding a full speed. 22. The buffalo hunt by Col. Cody and Indians exhibiting the last of the only known native herd of buffalo. 23. Attack on a settlers' cabin and rescue by Buffalo Bill and a band of cowboys. 24. Salute by the entire company.

There were thirty-two Indians in the performance as well as fourteen men in the Sixth U. S. Cavalry; eleven men in the Tenth U. S. Cavalry; seventeen men in the U. S. Artillery; fourteen men in the Roosevelt's Rough Riders; thirteen American cowboys; twelve men in the Fifth Royal Irish Lancers; eleven German Cuirassiers; seven Mexicans; nine Russian Cossacks; ten Arabs; nine Cubans; and seven Filipinos.

William Sweeney's cowboy band consisted of twenty-three pieces.

The cover of the 1900 Buffalo Bill program. Pfening Archives.



There was also a flute and drum corps of twelve men.

The wild west show opened under canvas in Brooklyn from May 7 to 12. Due to lot sizes the arena varied in size from 100 to 350 feet. It played Philadelphia from May 14 to 19, and soon after began a long string of one day stands before six days in Boston in late June. The show traveled on 40 cars: 16 flats, 15 stocks and 9 sleepers. There were also two advance advertising cars. There were 35 baggage wagons, 1 stage coach, 2 prairie schooners, 3 buggies, 2 ticket wagons, 2 bandwagons, 2 electric plants, and 2 field pieces.

The parade was given at noon. It included a parade leader on horseback. A drum corps of 14 men. Col. Cody in a carriage. Two mules. Eight Indians on horseback. German cavalry on 20 horses. A bandwagon with an eight horse hitch. Ten Indians on horseback. Six Japanese on horseback. Eight Russians on horseback. Ten Filipinos on horseback. Six Mexicans on horseback. Ten Indians on horseback. The cowboy band on horseback. Ten Cuban veterans on horseback. Eight Cubans on horseback. Nine Indians on horseback. A stage coach pulled by four mules. Thirteen cowboys on horseback. Nine Indians on horseback. A bandwagon pulled by an eight horse hitch. The U. S. Cavalry on 13 horses. Five cannons pulled by 18 horses.

On the way to Rochester, New York on July 7 the horse tents caught fire on the train and were badly burnt. In Hillsboro, Ohio on July 21 the flat car with the dining department broke down thirty miles from town. Further delay was caused when a wagon got away on the runs.

A serious wreck occurred to the first section on July 29 in the Grand Haven yards in Detroit, killing one man and injuring ten others. Seventy-eight canvas men were sleeping in the car at the time. As the train was backing down the tracks, a freight train approached on the same rails. The caboose was pushed back into car No. 56, crushing it half its length. The caboose was forced onto the roof of the sleeper. After the caboose and the ruined sleeper



were disconnected the show train proceeded to Pontiac, the next stand. In Pontiac a wagon was struck by a street car.

The show played St. Paul on August 14 where the arena was 168 by 397 feet in size. Chicago was played from August 27 to September 1. The route took the show through Iowa, Nebraska, Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, and Louisiana. It closed in Memphis on November 3 and then made the home run to winter quarters in Trenton, New Jersey.

The Ringling Bros. World's Greatest Show 1900 tour took the show from the Atlantic to the Pacific. It was the show's first visit to California.

The performance was presented in three rings and one stage. The opening number was The Last Days of the Century, a patriotic spectacle. Among the acts were the Tybells; Nettie Carroll and Yammamota, wire walkers; John O'Brien's giant liberty horse act; lady riders Julia Lawanda, and Lizzie Rooney; twenty-two clowns including Al Miaco, Spader Johnson, and Jules Turnour; elephants presented by Prof. Lockhart and Ed Souders; and the Flying Fishers and the DaComas, trapeze acts. The performance concluded with ten races on the hippodrome track. George Gauweller was musical director. The printed program consisted of four pages with local advertisements.

The large menagerie contained 32 cages, 23 elephants and 11 camels. Two sections probably carried the rail cars, assumed to be three advance cars, one camel car, four elephant cars, nine sleepers, one dining car, one combination dinner and sleeper, twelve stock cars, and twenty-seven flats.

The circus made a long jump to Wheeling, West Virginia to open there on April 18. It then played Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Massachusetts. Ringling was in Boston May 7 to 13 playing the Back Bay area on a landfill. New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio followed. In Cleveland on May 30 a trolley car ran into the pole wagon as the show was loading

out. By June 7 the show was in Michigan at Ann Arbor. Admiral Dewey visited in Detroit on June 11.

After a long Sunday run, Ringling played Dayton, Ohio on June 18 and Richmond, Indiana on the 19th. Kentucky and Indiana followed and by June 23 the show was in Illinois for three stands before entering Missouri on June 27. Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin followed. In Milwaukee on July 10 the show found the lot flooded. When the show played Green Bay on July 17 it was met with stiff opposition from the Buffalo Bill Wild West Show.

The July 11 Green Bay *Gazette* told of special billboards erected there by Ringling. The article stated: "The people along Pine Street today witnessed with much amusement the efforts of one circus advertising crew to get ahead of another. A few days ago the advertising men of Buffalo Bill's Wild West put up a large number of lithographs on the side of a building occupied by William Sequim. In fact they had literally covered the walls of the building well up to the roof. Today men working for

The Ringling Bros. used this newspaper ad in 1900. Pfening Archives.

the Ringling Bros. Circus began the erection of a billboard across the front of the vacant lot west of the building and hiding all of the posters."

From Wisconsin the circus headed west through Iowa and Nebraska. Ringling played Denver, Colorado on August 6 and 7. The route book said business there was immense. The first night 7,000 people were turned away. One of the elephant cars was knocked off the track as the show was loading out. Next came stands in Utah, Idaho and Montana. A long haul from Missoula, Montana to Spokane, Washington on August 27 was broken for a water stop in Hope. A single stand was played in Canada at Vancouver on September 1. It was the first time the show had ventured outside the United States. On September 3 the show played Seattle, arriving after dark. The show played Portland, Oregon on September 6 and 7.

On September 11 the circus entered California at Redding. According to the route book twelve engines were required to pull the show over the mountains. Oakland was shown on September 18. A ferry boat taking the show to nearby San

Francisco sank and the show had to go by rail to San Jose and then to the Bay City by rail for the September 19 to 26 stand. Because of the late arrival the parade did not leave the grounds until 11:30. The company played to capacity at all afternoon shows. The route took the show to San Jose, Santa Cruz, Sacramento, Stockton, Merced, Fresno, Bakersfield and Santa Barbara. Los Angeles was played on October 9 and 10.

Phoenix, Arizona was shown on October 15 as the circus was heading home. Indians came by wagon to see the show in Tucson the next day. The lot in El Paso was not large enough until agent George Heiser bought a row of adobe houses in one corner of the grounds and had them torn down. Pecos, Texas was lost as the show did not arrive until after dark. The large elephant Romeo was shot and killed after becoming unruly in Wichita Falls,

Last Call--Tomorrow is Circus Day in Richmond!

# RINGLING BROS.

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500 Horses ✓  
300 Performers ✓  
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AN EQUINE SENSATION

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TWO COMPLETE EXHIBITIONS DAILY, AT 2 AND 8 P. M. . . . DOORS OPEN ONE HOUR EARLIER.

THE ACKNOWLEDGED GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH.



Texas on October 22.

After playing stands in New Mexico and Louisiana the season closed in Monticello, Arkansas on November 14. Following the close of the tour the show bought the Sam Lockhart elephants that had been with the show.

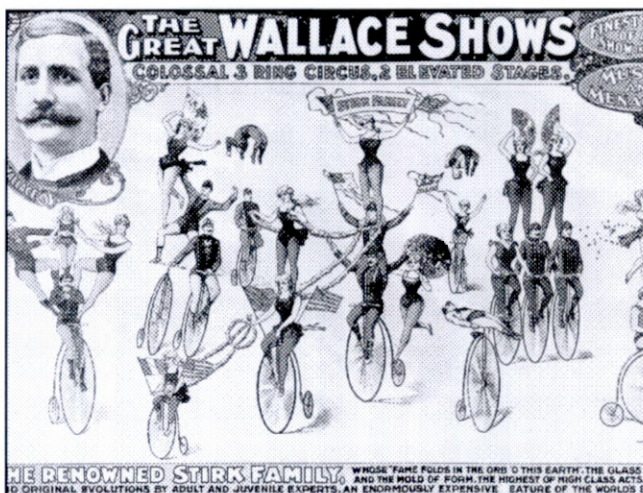
The 1900 season was a great one for the Great Wallace Shows. W. E. Franklin was general agent and R. M. Harvey was contracting agent. The circus used two advance cars and two opposition brigades. Traveling in two sections the show had at least fifty cars.

The big top was a 180 foot round with three fifty foot middles and one sixty foot middle. The menagerie was an 80 foot round with five forty foot middles. The side show was a seventy-five foot round with two thirty foot middles. The dressing top was a 50 foot round with one forty foot middle. The horse top was a 72 foot round with two forty foot middles.

The hippopotamus George was added to the menagerie and placed in a new den. The menagerie included a dozen new miniature cages and one hundred small Shetland ponies. The full menagerie contained six elephants, one hippo, nine camels, two yaks, two zebras, two sacred cattle, two llamas and twenty-five cages.

The Nelson and Stirk families were new to the performance under equestrian director Charles H. Sweeney. Other performers included seven clowns; somersault riders William F. Melrose and Fred Ledgett; special clown Horse Webb; Lil Kerslake, educated pigs; and principal lady riders Blanche Reed, Olga Reed and Winnie Sweeney. C. Z. Bronson directed the 21 piece big show band.

Although the parade and performance was highly praised by the press, it was severely criticized in after notices as having cooche dancers in the side show and all kinds of grift, including short changing, shell games, pick pockets and the like. General admission tickets were 60 cents at the main ticket wagon at the head of the midway and 50 cents at a second wagon near the marquee.



The Great Wallace Shows used this Courier Company litho in 1900. Library of Congress.

The season opened in the winter quarters town of Peru, Indiana on Saturday April 28. All day Sunday was spent loading the train for the trip to Indianapolis for the stand there on April 30. Dates in Ohio lead the circus to Pennsylvania at Sharon on May 16. The pole wagon broke down on the way from the lot to the train in Jeannette on May 19. The show played Schenectady, New York on May 28. By June 5 the show was in Claremont, New Hampshire.

In Burlington, Vermont on June 5 one of the stringer wagons ran away down a hill going to the train at night. One of the wheel horses fell and was so badly injured by the wagon up on him that it had to be killed.

The show faced opposition in Bradford, Pennsylvania on June 27. The Buffalo Bill show was booked for July 9. The route book stated: "We had had them out billed from every standpoint."

For the first time a big circus train was pulled by an electric engine when the show made the run to Lockport, New York from Tonawanda on June 20. A two day run took the show to Port Huron, Michigan on July 2. On July 9 in Petrosky, Michigan one of the flats ran into coach No. 23, doing considerable damage to both the flat and the coach. The accident delayed the departure until 4:00 a. m.

In Muskegon, Michigan opposition came from the Buckskin Bill Wild

West Show." Additional opposition from Forepaugh-Sells met the show in Peoria, Illinois on July 16. The other show had been there three weeks before. More opposition from Buffalo Bill came at Freeport, Illinois on July 25. The Bill show was scheduled for August 25.

A fire in a packing house near the lot in Iowa City, Iowa on August 10 created sparks that reached the lot and the concert was stopped as the big top was promptly

dropped and the wagons were quickly drawn by the frightened horses to safety.

In Ottumwa, Iowa on August 13 a near cyclone developed at six in the evening and for a while played havoc with the menagerie, side show and horse tent, the only tents still in the air. They were blown into ribbons and the horse tent was so demolished a new one was ordered by express. The cages were corralled for several days while repairs were made to the menagerie top.

In Garnett, Kansas, population 2,300, the Wallace show had a real billing war with the John Robinson Circus on August 18. When the Robinson outfit learned Wallace was coming in after it, the Robinson advance sounded a general alarm and marshaled all of its forces, hiring special agents and ordering printing and banners galore. All for a puny little town.

On the way to Carthage, Missouri on August 20 the Wallace show went on a side track to let the Forepaugh-Sells show to pass on the way to Kansas City.

In Webb City, Missouri on August 21 a storm struck the troupe at 7:30 in the evening. The big top was two-thirds filled and the menagerie was packed full of people. The side show and dressing tent went down with the first blast and the two main tents trembled in the balance. The big top was not blown down, but was sadly torn and the menagerie was not in much better condition. The performance was started at nine o'clock

In Galena, Kansas on August 23 one of the big parade tableaux turned over while leaving the lot at night,



causing a three hour delay reaching the runs. The circus arrived late in Springfield, Missouri on August 24 and the doors were not opened until 3 p. m. The John Robinson Circus followed in four days. The nation's capitol was played on October 1 and 2. The season closed on October 16 in Circleville, Ohio. The total mileage was 19,461 miles.

The John Robinson 10 Big Shows with its grand collection of carved tableau and cage wagons opened in Columbia, Ohio on April 28, traveling on forty-two cars in one account, thirty-six in another. It was the oldest title used by a circus, being before the public almost every year since 1842. John F. Robinson was sole owner and John G. Robinson was manager. Oliver Scott was general agent. George S. Cole was general advertising manager. The twenty-two piece band was led by M. C. Rogers.

The show lost 12 of 19 camels on a ship from Calcutta that landed on March 23. By the end of the season six more had died.

Robert D. Stickney was director general of the big show. William Dutton was equestrian director. The opening spec was that Robinson perennial, Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, a massive presentation.

The performers included riders Effie Dutton, Katie Krueger, George Holland, Harry Lamkin, James Dutton, and Chevalier Romeo Sebastian; menage rider Louise DeMott; the Hocums, equestrians; the Roberts Trio, acrobats; The La Van aerial bar act and Rowenna, balancing trapeze. The menagerie contained six elephants, and sixteen camels.

On May 5 in Marysville, Ohio a fire broke out in sleeping car No. 5, but was quickly extinguished. Another small fire was in the ticket wagon in Tipton, Indiana on May 24. On June 28 the circus played Caldwell, Ohio with a population of 1,200, but drew a packed matinee. A sea lion was born in Parkersburg, West Virginia on June 29. In St. Marys, West Virginia on July 2 it took thirty-six horses and two elephants to get the



A 1900 John Robinson Circus parade. Pfening Archives.

stable wagon up a hill and on the lot. A polar bear died on July 4 in Charleston, West Virginia, but the locals turned in out droves, prompting a third performance that day.

The first two months of the season saw the show in and out of Ohio before heading west to Indiana. Four new elephants, costing \$6,500 from Carl Hagenbeck in Germany, arrived on July 13 in Martinsville, Indiana. Another middle was added to the big top and two cars were added to the train.

The show ran into Forepaugh-Sells paper in Moberly, Missouri on July 30. A photographer took a number of pictures for the route book in Fort Scott, Kansas on August 6. The Old John show played Osage City, Kansas on August 11, its first visit there since 1883.

By September the show headed back east from Missouri. After six stands in Arkansas, Memphis was played on September 10 to outstanding business. At the night performance 2,000 were turned away. A camel died that day.

Robinson went as far east as Richmond, Virginia and turned back through West Virginia. The show played Corinth, Mississippi where it closed on October 31.

The second largest and second best known wild west show of 1900 was owned by Major Gordon W. Lillie, known as Pawnee Bill. The show traveled on seven stock cars, ten flats and six sleepers, plus two advance advertising cars. The big show arena was 600 feet square; the side show was a 60 with two 30s; The horse tent was a 100 with three 40s; the dressing top was 90 x 50; the blacksmith

top was 70 x 40 feet. Two dining tents were 60 x 40.

O. J. Krause was general manager and W. E. Ferguson was general agent. Band leader Nicola Olivieri had nineteen musicians. Side show manager H. G. Wilson had seventeen attractions and a ten piece band. There was a "living picture" annex on the midway with models and Oriental dancers.

Pawnee Bill's Historic Wild West opened the 1900 season with what was reported to be all-new equipment. Winter quarters was in Chester, Pennsylvania, where the show opened on May 5. When loading out the first night, a new range wagon fell off the runs and was slightly damaged.

The route book listed the displays as: 1. Grand Entree by Entire Company. 2. Pony Express. 3. Lassoing and Riding Texas Steers, Cowboys and Mexicans. 4. A Realistic Reproduction of the Great Stage Coach Robbery by the Cowboys, Mexicans and Indians. 5. Arabian Acrobats. Salam Hadj Ali's Famous Ali Troupe. 6. Cowboy Sports and Pastimes, Cowboys and Mexicans. 7. The Superiority of American Horsemanship Against the World, demonstrated by a Detachment of Roosevelt's Rough Riders Under Direction of Sergeant Jack Lear. 8. Catching and Hanging the Horse Thief by Cowboys and Mexicans. 9. Fancy and Expert Lassoing by Heck Quinn, of Wyoming, and Jose Bararo (Mexican Joe), of Mexico. 10. The Rope Circle, Mexican Rufus. 11. Excelsior, Miss May Lillie, the World's Greatest Lady Horseback Shot. 12. A Realistic Representation of the Atrocious Mountain Meadow Massacre, by Cowboys and Indians. 13. The Mexican Contra Dance on Horseback, by Ladies and Gentlemen of the Company, Led by Pawnee Bill and May Lillie. 14. Alex Georgian's Troupe of Russian Cossacks, the Most Dextrous and Daring Riders Ever Seen (by Permission Czar of Russia). 15. Grand Military Tournament, Introducing the Tactics of the Great Military Powers of the World. 16. A Troupe of South American Gauchos, Throwing the Bolas, the



South American Cowboys' Lasso or Lariat. 17. Riding Wild Bucking Bronchos, by Cowboys and Mexicans.

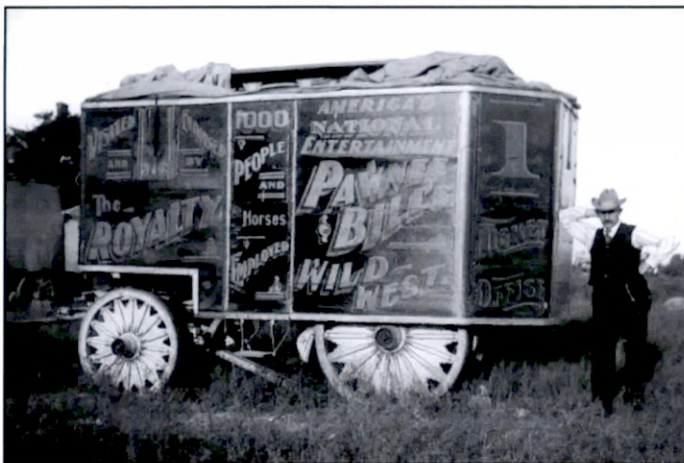
Hippodrome Races: Roman Standing Race. H. Wible, succeeded by Jas. Martin. Race of Nations. Cowboy, Indian, Mexican, Cossack. Ladies' Race. Miss Blanche Hastrawser, Miss Kittle Morgan. Miss Alice Lerette. Miss Mabel Merrick. Miss Nellie Connors. Indian Race for a Handkerchief, Indians. Chariot Race. Thos. Barry. Billie Taylor, Omer Swiegert. The Burning of Trapper Tom's Cabin. A Vigorous Attack of Indians Repulsed by Cowboys and Mexicans Led by Pawnee Bill.

The show played Elizabeth, New Jersey on May 13 where the first "Hey Rube" of the season occurred. Some local drunks threw stones at the Indians, but were quickly bested by the native Americans.

Pawnee Bill returned to Pennsylvania at Easton on May 20 and played that state until July 2. A three day stand in Pittsburgh producing a banner day on June 26 when nearly 3,000 were turned away for lack of standing room. A number of Ohio stands were made, ending with a two day stand in Toledo on July 15-16.

A tour of Michigan followed. In Mt. Clemens on July 26 an electric street car struck a wagon on a bridge, injuring the driver and badly damaging the wagon. The team broke loose and ran over three donkeys.

In August the outfit was in Indiana. On August 14 in Elwood, the big bandwagon fell off the train into a ditch, upside down. A severe storm that day blew down the black top on the midway and side wall of the arena. The horse and side show tops were saved by a prompt "pulling of the peaks." Major Lillie's home town of Bloomington, Illinois was played on August 18. Much of September was spent in Iowa. On September 16 in Algona, Iowa the cookhouse wagons got stuck in the mud



The Pawnee Bill Wild West ticket wagon. Kenneth Farnum Collection from the book *Pawnee Bill's Historic Wild West* by Allen L. Farnum.

about half way to the lot so they were unloaded and the dining tents were set up on the spot.

The remainder of the season saw the show in Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska and Oklahoma. The closing was on October 27 in Blackwell, Oklahoma.

Buckskin Bill's Wild West, a new show in 1900, was owned by Sid Terrell and wintered in Paducah, Kentucky. The show had a direct, but unofficial, connection with the Pawnee Bill show.

Harry Valentine Bock had been with Pawnee Bill for a number of years, doubling as a carpenter and a cowboy known as "Buckskin Harry." He was also a photographer, taking a number of photos of the Pawnee Bill operation. He had wild west

A Buckskin Bill baggage wagon. Kenneth Farnum Collection from the book *Pawnee Bill's Historic Wild West* by Allen L. Farnum.



show fever with Cody and Lillie as his heroes. In 1900 Bock changed his name to Buckskin Bill and joined Terrell in a new wild west show using the title Buckskin Bill's Realistic Wild West. Winter quarters were established on Terrell's property in Paducah, Kentucky with Buckskin Harry as quarters manager.

Bock supervised the building of the show, making it look like a junior Pawnee Bill. Some of the wagons may have come from excess Pawnee Bill equipment. It is thought the show traveled on ten cars. A *Billboard* report stated the show had 146 horses. Harry W. Semon was general agent until he was replaced by Danny Robinson, who later became a semi-famous show owner.

Bock had invested his money with Terrell, a Paducah, Kentucky, landholder who framed the show. He was skinned out of his investment and was bankrupt within a year. Although Bock's experience was with the "Sunday school" Lillie outfit, he quickly learned that the new show was to be a "rootin'-tootin'" gift operation. Bock left the show in mid-season. He went back to being Buckskin Harry and returned to the Pawnee Bill outfit where he stayed until 1908.

Newspaper ads listed the title as Col. V. F. Cody's Buckskin Bill's Wild West, Grand Military Tournament and Rough Riders of the World. It paraded each day. The show opened in late April. Few large cities were played, the route being restricted to smaller towns where the gift could work.

Many stands were in the mountain towns in Kentucky and Tennessee. By May 30 the show was in Ashland, Pennsylvania. Other stands were Uniontown, Pennsylvania on June 16, Allegheny, Pennsylvania, June 27; Ironton, Ohio, July 14; Logansport, Indiana, August 10; Bloomington, Illinois, August 18; Avica, Iowa,



There were six brothers, Virg, Al, Ed, Lee, Charles and William. Lee Greer and Fred Hatfield joined them in the operation of the circus. The troupe opened on April 26 in Fairbury, Nebraska on nine cars. It entered Colorado on May 7 at Sterling. It played Salt Lake City, Utah, June 4 to 6. Stands in Idaho and Wyoming followed before the circus turned back east through North and south Dakota. By August 18 it was in New Mexico. A six week tour of Texas began with a two day stand at El Paso on August 30-31. Two and a half weeks in Arkansas took Campbell to its closing stand in Hope



The new Sells and Gray United Shows was framed in Peru, Indiana. Willie Sells and James H. Gray were general managers. Bert Stafford was advance manager; Charles Hugo was side show manager; William Delavoie was equestrian director; Ed Barnum was boss can-

Sells and Gray opened in Elwood, Indiana on May 5. After a number of stands in Indiana, it played Kentucky and Tennessee. It then went through Indiana, again to Illinois, then back to Kentucky and Tennessee. On July 19 it was in Missouri. By August 13 it was in Oklahoma. Stands in Texas began on August 30. By October 2 it was in Arkansas, followed by appearances in Mississippi. On November 5 it entered Florida at Pensacola. The circus went by boat to Key West. The season closed in Miami, Florida on December 27. A 536 mile home run



took the show to Savannah, Georgia where winter quarters were established in government buildings that had been erected as hospitals for the Spanish-American war. It made an ideal winter home. The Sells & Gray show played 15 states, showed 231 days and traveled 13,265 miles during the tour.

Another new 1900 railroad circus was Rhoda Royal, owned by Royal and Joseph Berris, using equipment leased from Walter L. Main. The circus moved on five flats, two horse cars and two sleepers. There were twenty-one wagons, six of which were cages.

The opening was reported in the May 5 New York *Clipper*: "The Great Rhoda Royal Shows opened the 1900 season in Geneva, Ohio, Saturday, April 28, and at both afternoon and evening performance the seating capacity of the spacious tents were taxed to their utmost. They write: 'The parade in the morning made a gala day for the village, and thousands flocked in from the country, and all pronounced both parade and show unequalled. The show is, beyond all fear of contradiction, one of the neatest, cleanest and up to date railroad shows of the season. It is new from start to finish and as pretty as it is novel. There is positively not one piece of old or left over property with it.'

Newspaper ad used by Rhoda Royal in 1900. Pfening Archives.

"The menagerie is large and valuable, and nearly every animal has received his or her education at the hand of experienced trainers. One particular

department that is deserving of more than passing mention is the stock. Royal and Berris have certainly succeeded in getting around them the cream of exhibition, educated and draught horses, while the diminutive ponies are sure to leave a lasting impression. The Cleveland, Ashtabula and Geneva papers have endorsed the show in its entirety and the performance in particular, while the public have yet to register the first complaint. Prominent among the features in the big show might be mentioned the Eddy Family, six in number; Mme. Royal and her tandem team, in menage act; the Petit Family, six in

number, in aerial work; Prof. Joseph Berris and his sixty-three trained horses; Rhoda Royal and his school of educated equines; sixteen of Roosevelt's Rough Riders, under Captain Sharpe; the Thompson Boys and their trick burro Snow, the school of educated ponies; the Thompson Brothers, in their burlesque bounding Jockey mule act; wire walkers; clowns; contortionists and equilibrists.

"In the annex are, among the others: Balbroma, fire king; Olga, snake hypnotist; Prof. Irving, Punch and Judy and magic; cage of forty performing parrots; mind reader; cage of fourteen performing fine bicycle riding monkeys; magnetic lady; Captain De Coarsey, tattooed Greek; and a troupe of performing dogs. The black tent is under

the management of B. Sardon, and is one of the largest ever carried in connection with another exhibition.


"Roster: Rhoda Royal and Prof. Joseph Berris, lessees; I. V. Strebig, manager; Tony Richards, ex-treasurer of W. L. Main show, treasurer; Prof. Jos. Berris, equestrian director; Rhoda Royal, director; W. W. Power, railroad contractor; W. St. Auburn, local contractor; John D. Carey, press representative; Don McKerizie, superintendent car No. 1; Harry Anderson, manager box brigade; W. J. Doris, superintendent of privileges; Harry Howard, front door talker; W. B. Irving, lecturer; William Spencer, superintendent of menagerie; H. Kehose, manager cook tent; Fred Biddle, chef, with three assistants; Ed Kennely, superintendent of canvas; W. Nure, assistant; John Daly, trainmaster; E. B. Simpson, porter; J. Mack, porter car Washington; Harry Edwards, porter workmen's car; L. Gordon, superintendent black tent; John Doy, canvas boss of side show; Prof. Jenretti, leader of band No. 1, eighteen pieces; U. Shaw, leader band No 2, ten pieces; Bud Horn, calliope player; Hennessey Maybeld, superintendent of candy butchers; H. H. Steward, in charge of concert tickets; B. Horn, in charge of reserved seat tickets; W. Montgomery advertising contractor."

The Great Syndicate Shows, traveling on 10 cars, was a gift outfit that created heat in every town played. It was run out of a number of towns in Minnesota in August. In December James Smith, the owner, offered half interest in the outfit for sale.

The W. H. Harris Nickle Plate Shows opened in Chicago and played lots around the city after opening on April 21. It traveled on eight cars, one sleeper, one dining car, three flats, two stocks and one advertising car.

Featured performers included the St. Leon family of acrobats; Emma Lake, slack wire; Al Orton, rider and the Smith's flying trapeze act. It played Staunton, Virginia on May 15 and by June 6 was in Ohio. Michigan, Indiana and Illinois followed before returning to Ohio in July where it remained until going into Indiana and Kentucky. It closed in Paducah, Kentucky on October 20.

In addition to the big boys there were a number of smaller circuses on

AT WESTERLY,  
ON  
**TUESDAY, SEPT. 4,**  
THE GREAT 1900  
**Rhoda Royal**  
SHOWS!  
World's Cleanest, Grandest, &  
Amusement Institution Existing.  
A Colossal and Overshadowing Universal  
**Exposition of Attractions!**  
Marvelous in the extent of the unparalleled  
features, elevating, wholesome and refined  
performances always the rule.  
Museum, Menagerie, Hippodrome,  
Rough Riders and Trained  
Animal Exposition.  
**6-THE MARVELOUS EDDYS-6**  
**JOSEPH BERRIS**  
And his 63-Horse act.  
**MADAM ROYAL**  
And Her Peerless Tandem Team of Arabian  
Horses.  
  
Sousa's Band Laughable Burlesque  
Clowns, Wits and Jesters.  
Over a dozen Comical Clowns,  
Acrobats, Pantomimists, Singing Buffoons,  
and Witty Jesters.



rails. Tom Hargraves opened a new five car show in 1900. It used an 100 foot big top with two 50s. Cooper & Co. was owned by J. R. W. Hennessey and traveled on four cars.

The Gentry brothers from Bloomington, Indiana operated four circuses, all called Gentry Bros. in 1900 each one traveled on four cars.

Welsh Bros. Circus, traveling on four cars, had a hundred foot big top with two 50s, the side show was in a 60 with one 40.

It played 23 weeks in five states and closed on October 22. After closing the show bought four cars, five cages and some wardrobe from B. E. Wallace. The brothers also operated a second show on wagons.

The Norris & Rowe Circus was the renamed Norris Bros. Dog & Pony Show. Traveling on four cars it opened with a sixteen day stand in San Francisco on May 3. The three elephants on the show were Fargo, Duke and Hero. Fargo was a dwarf elephant. Major Mike, a dwarf, was featured in the aftershow. It played California until going into Oregon at Salem and from May 14 to 19 it was in Portland. Seattle was played from May 28 to June 3. In Spokane, Washington it met opposition from the Great Syndicate Shows. The one Canadian stand was in Vancouver, British Columbia, June 11-12.

In July Norris & Rowe headed east, playing Rocky Mountain states. It was in Auconda, Montana on July 2. From July 20 to August 4 it was in Detroit. Toronto, Ontario saw the outfit the week of August 13. The show was in Port Huron, Michigan on August 27, played Toledo on September 1 and Dayton, Ohio on September 5 and 6. It appeared in Gainesville, Texas on September 27. On October 3 the show bought two elephants. It closed in Pasadena, California on November 30.

Lowery Bros. Olympia Show operated by George B. Lowery, used three cars. It had a 100 foot big top with two 30s, the horse tent was 65 x 100 and cook tent was 45 x 75. The show opened on May 28 in Dallas, Pennsylvania and closed on September 29. The parade included seventy ponies and fourteen cages.

**ONLY A FEW MORE DAYS TO WAIT.**

AT **LANCASTER**  **Beginning Saturday, April 14th.**

**11 DAYS**

**Welsh Bros.**

**Admission Reduced to**



**Great Shows**

**10cts.**

A 1900 Welsh Bros. Circus newspaper ad. Pfening Archives.

Skerebeck's One Ring Show from Wisconsin was on four cars with a 100 foot big top with one 50. The side show was in a 50 x 30 top.

John H. Sparks Old Virginia Shows used three cars.

Wixom Bros. Great Railroad Shows traveled on three cars. It opened on May 6 and spent nearly the whole season in Michigan, with a few dates in Northern Ohio. It closed on September 30.

The Fitzhugh & Company, of Chicago, sold and leased all types of rail cars. The firm advertised regularly in the New York *Clipper* offering flat, stock and sleeping cars to outdoor showmen. This allowed wagon show operators to step up to rails. It was not unusual for Fitzhugh to close a show for lack of payment.

Those barely on rails were the two car outfits, all gilly shows using a large baggage car and a sleeper. All equipment was carried to the lot in knock down wagons.

The Andrew Downie New Rail Road shows closed on July 28 in Pittston, Pennsylvania.

James W. Goodrich's Mammoth Shows had two cars.

Hall & Long Railroad Shows, was probably on two cars.

Merchants' American Rail Road Shows was on two cars, using an 80 foot big top to with one 50.

The Indian Bill Wild West, on 2 cars, had 26 horses and 42 people. It was owned by J. A. Jones.

The Gus Sun Circus, traveling on 2 cars, made a two months tour, closing on July 21. It was then converted into a minstrel show. Sun offered to

sell the show after the closing.

At the bottom of the sawdust operations were the wagon shows. These small outfits pulled their wagons overland and walked all the lead stock. Their jumps were seldom longer than twenty or thirty miles. At the mercy of the elements, their wagons often became stuck in the muddy dirt roads. Yet they prospered, using plenty of lithographs.

A typical wagon show was offered for sale in July 1900 in the New York *Clipper*. The ad read: "Circus for sale. Big top 90 with one 50 and two 30s, side show, 50 foot round top; seats, lights, wardrobe; bandwagon; ticket wagon; tableau wagon; two parade wagons; three baggage wagons; one passenger hack, advance wagon, baggage stock, ponies, dogs and monkeys." No price was set, reply was to a post office box in Des Moines, Iowa.

Wagon circuses touring in 1900 included:

Adell's Dog & Pony.  
Ballenger Family Shows.  
Mollie Bailey  
Bailey & Sons  
Bliss & Davis  
Barber Bros.

Asa Barker's 10 & 20 Cent Shows with a 70 foot big top with one 30.

Ed P. Barlow  
Barns Bros.  
Barlow's

Charles Bartine's New Consolidated Show. Bartine started his circus in 1868. It used an 80 foot big top with one 50. The side show was 65 x 35. It had 15 wagons and 34 horses.

Burns, Boldt & Hanus Circus, was a Wisconsin outfit using 13 wagons and a 60 foot big top. It closed July 12.

Bonheur Bros. had 18 wagons and used an 80 foot big top with two 40s.  
Buchanan Bros.

Carsile's Wild West

Pete Conklin's Circus had all new wagons and tents, 15 baggage wagons, one bandwagon and one ticket wagon.

Clark Bros., owned by A. T. Clark  
M. L. Clark  
Colossal Shows  
Colorado Grant

Cullen Bros. used an 80 foot big top



with two 40s, the side show was 50 x 90. The parade had 10 wagons, 8 mounted people, 2 brass bands, 12 head of stock, and 2 clown carts.

The Elton Bros. show had 11 wagons, 27 horses and used an 80 foot big top with one 40.

Dashington Bros. Dog & Pony

The Ed F. Davis Circus was offered for sale in October.

D'Alma Famous Trained Animal Shows

DeLisli's Overland

Dixon Bowers & Dixon

Sam Docks' Keystone Circus

George S. Ely's show traveled on 16 wagons.

Exposition Circus

Foster & Wilkins Great London had a 75 foot big top with one 45.

Walter Gailagher

Gibb's Olympic

William H. Gillmeyer used a 90 foot big top with one 50.

Alex Glasscock

In February the Gollmar Bros. wagon show bought additional equipment from the Hall family in Evansville, Wisconsin.

Charles A. Gollmar was general manager. Fred C. Gollmar was general advance manager. B. F. Gollmar was treasurer. Walter Gollmar was equestrian director.

The April 25 *Baraboo Republic* told of the Gollmar show: "The capacity of the quarters has been doubled. The new ring barn is one of the more noticeable improvements. The large elephant is now quite adept at performing. The menagerie has been improved by the addition of a den of lions, hyenas, a bear, a kangaroo, moneys, and birds. John Rooney and Willis Gollmar have succeeded in working up a double bearback (sic) riding act. One hundred horses will be required to handle the show." The May 10 *Sauk County Democrat* told of the opening: "The parade was splended, being much improved over previous years."

The May 9 *Baraboo Republic* reviewed the 1900 Gollmar performance: "A large number gathered to witness the free exhibition which consisted of a dive by the dog Prince, and high wire work by Prof. Brandon, and band and figure work in front of the side show tent. The

**COMING SOON**

**THE FAMOUS BB & H CIRCUS**

**THE "BIG 4" PAVILLION SHOWS.**

A Show for the People - A Show of Merit - Especially for Ladies and Children. Housed Conducted. A Great Holiday for All.

**NO WAITS DELAYS DISAPPOINTMENTS. NO BOMBAST. NO EXAGGERATIONS.**

**TEN TIMES LARGER AND BETTER THAN EVER.**

**WE LEAD THEM - Many Base Imitators! - But No Equals!**

**WE**

**THE ONE AND ONLY BIG EVENT IN THE SHOW WORLD OF 1900.**

**AT POPULAR PRICES, CAN BE REACHED BY ALL.**

**100 NEW AND STRANGE NOVELTIES 100**

**ONE DAY ONLY. GRAND UNIVERSAL HOLIDAY.**

**ADMISSION 15 & 25 CENTS.**

Herald used by the ill-fated Burns, Boldt & Hanus wagon show in 1900. Pfening Archives.

attendance at the afternoon performance was larger than usual and everybody seemed to enjoy every act. The pageant tournament, or grand entree, was first-class in every respect." The second number of the program was given by Harry Brandon and Otto Weaver, who worked on the swinging wire. Willis Gollmar appeared in the rapid riding feat which shows that he has spent much time in training. The double trapeze act was given by the Shaw brothers and was equal to the best on the road. Palm, the trained elephant, amused everybody with tricks of various sorts. Warrior brothers surprised their reviewers by their

exceptional work in their perch and single trapezee work. The hand balancing by Mr. Weaver was much better than last year. His act is a very difficult one. Walt Gollmar appeared with his trained pigs, and although the Baraboo people have seen this act several times, it was an interesting feature. The skillful and rapid Japanese juggling by Miss Brandon was well received.

"John Rooney and Willis Gollmar won the plaudits of all in their somersault riding. They have but few equals, Herr Drayton did some wonderful feats in lifting great weights. The equestrian goat proved as apt on horseback as last year. The jockey riding by John Rooney was good. The manege act, by Mike Rooney, was a rare treat in horse training. The educated pony and mule were good. The four-horse act by Willis Gollmar was a splendid feature. The tumbling, work of the clowns, music and the many other features were up to the standard of circus performing and would pass muster anywhere.

"The show seems to be new throughout. The wardrobe and all the inside equipment are new. All the canvas is new, which gives the whole the appearance of a new circus. In fact it is a new circus only it is under old and experienced management."

The Gollmar show played Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska and Illinois. It closed on October 6 in Stoughton, Wisconsin after traveling 2,563 miles. The average daily milage was nineteen and a quarters miles.

Other shows included:

Garmston

Mighty Haag

Hall, Long & Eldon closed early on August 15.

The George W. Hall Jr. circus had 15 wagons, 5 cages, a 100 foot big top and a 40 x 90 side show top.

Harman & Willis

J. E. Henry

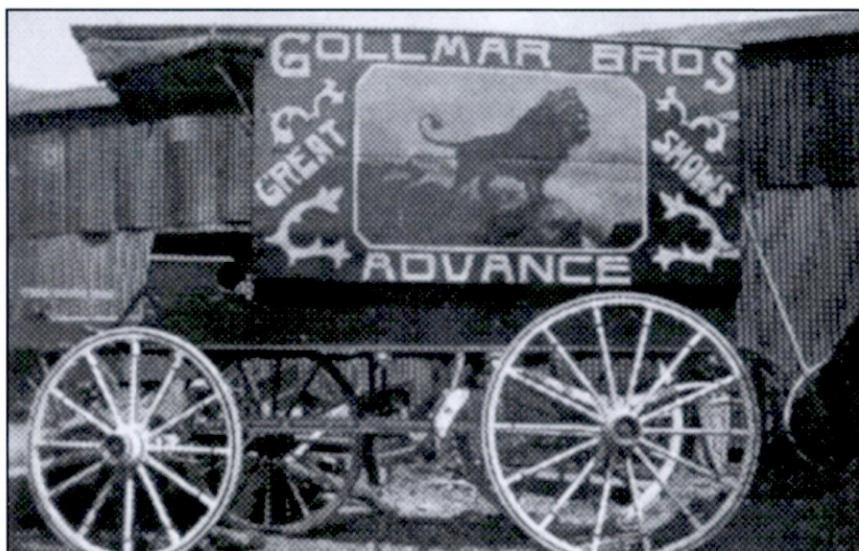
Col. Howes

Kennedy Bros. Wild West was operated by W. T. and C. C. Kennedy.

Kemp Sisters Wild West played fairs and celebrations.

Louis' Crescent Circus with 50 people and 50 horses had a new bandwagon,





The Gollmar Bros. Circus overland advance car. Pfening Archives.

Leondar Bros. had 18 wagons, 78 horses and a 100 foot round big top with one 50 foot middle.

Lee Bros. was sold to Price & Honeywell at end of season.

Lewis & Copeland

Lucky Bill owned by William Newton Sr.

McCormick Bros. Great Silver Plate Shows

The Waiter J. McDonald wagon show traveled on 28 wagons, including twelve cages. It had a 120 big top with a 50 foot middle, a 70 foot menagerie with two 40s. The side show tent was 40 x 80 feet.

Prof. McMilligan

Mitchells' Big Pavilion Show

Moore Bros. & Co.

Nat's United

Miles Orton

Price & Davis

A. H. Reed's European

Rehn's United Shows had 20 wagons and 60 people using an 80 foot big top with one 30. Their horse top was 30 x 60.

Reo Grande Wild West

Renos' Oriental had 14 wagons and 40 horses.

Rice Dog & Pony Show.

Rice & Davis, owned by Elmer Jones, had an 80 foot big top with two 40s.

Royal's Dog & Pony Show

The Sig Sautelle wagon show used a 110 foot big top with one 50. It had thirty horses, one elephant and one camel. The parade included floats,

cages and tableaux and a bandwagon. Frank A. Robbins joined in mid-season in a management capacity. The December 8 New York *Clipper* contained a Sautelle for sale advertisement.

Sipe & Blake Dog & Pony

The Shott Bros. Circus had 14 wagons and thirty horses. Their big top was a 70 with one 30. The side show tent was 40 x 60 feet.

Slicks' Circus

Sol's United Shows

E. G. Smith's Monster Shows

Capt. W. H. Stewart's show had a 90 foot big top with one 50, 4 baggage wagons, one carry-all, 2 carriages and one bill wagon.

Emmett Snyder

New Model Shows used an 80 foot big top and traveled on 12 wagons with 30 head of stock.

F. J. Taylor

Otis Turner United Shows

Tedrow & Gettle

Tuttle's Olympic Shows traveled on seven wagons and fourteen horses.

Teets Bros.

Tuttles' Olympic used a 75 foot big top, 7 wagons and 14 horses.

Wintermute Bros. had a 100 foot big top, 35 x 65, side show tent 5 cages and 50 horses

A. V. Whitney's Big One Ring Circus

Van Amburgh & Gailagher

The Circus World Museum, John Polacsek, James Cole and Allan Farnum provided information and illustrations for this article.

The 1900 Sig Sautelle ticket wagon. Pfening Archives.



**HOLIDAY  
GREETINGS**

from

**CIRCUS REPORT**



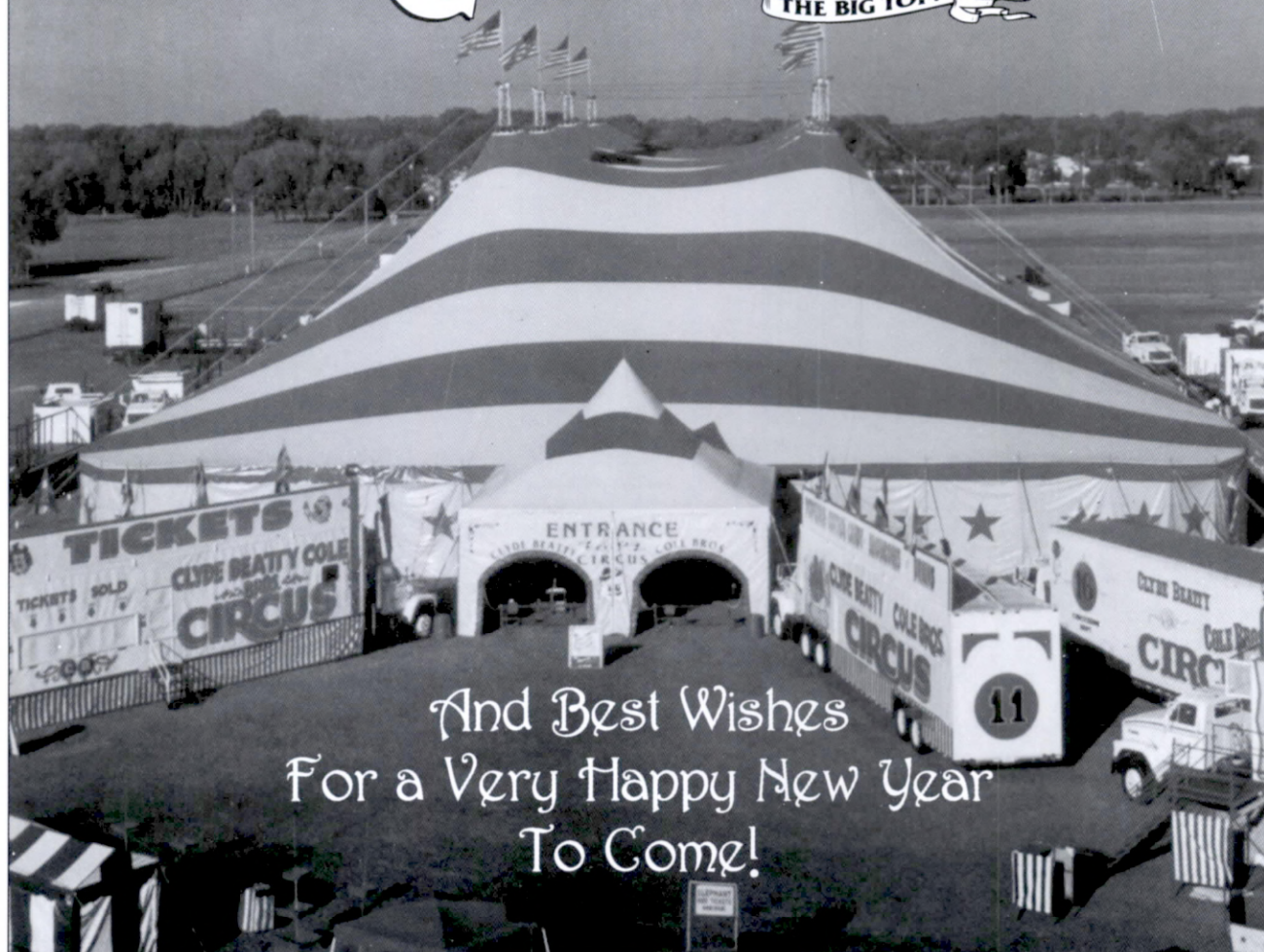


# Season's Greetings



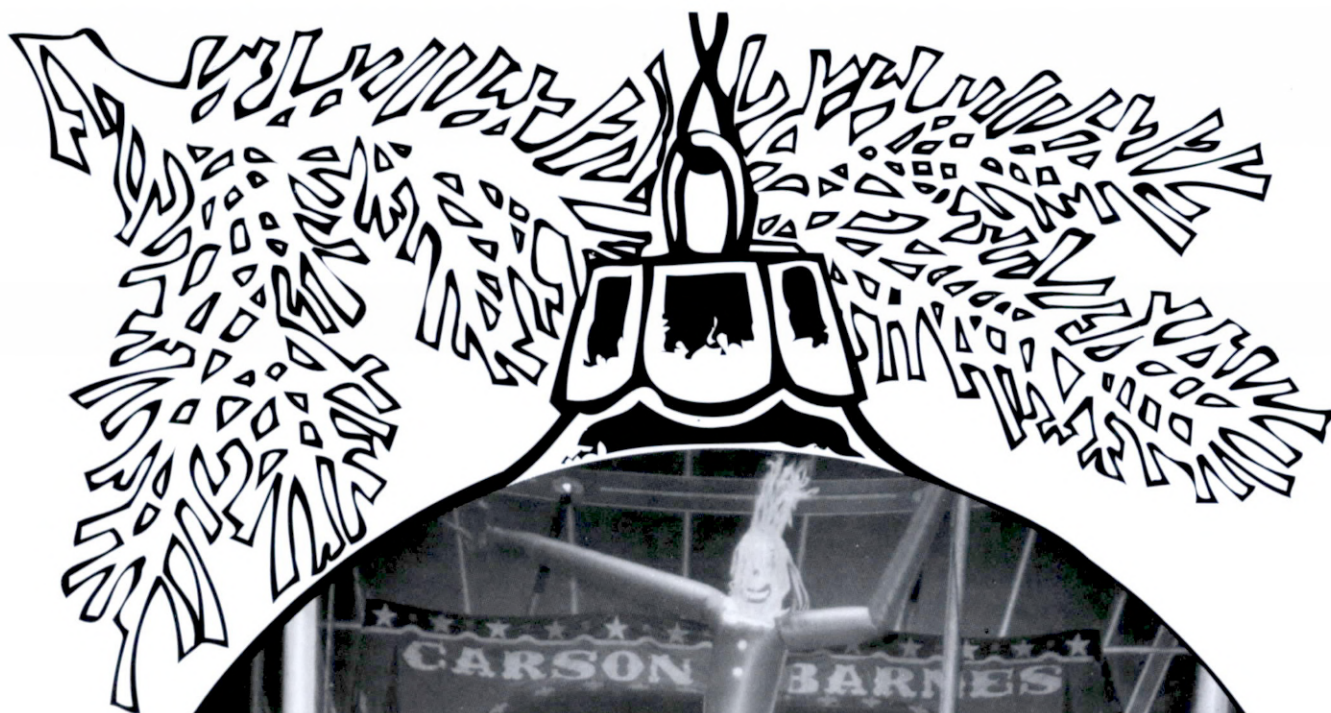
*From John and Brigitte Pugh  
And the 2000 Tour Cast and Staff of*

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**COLE BROS.**  
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For a Very Happy New Year  
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# TWO RINGS and a Hippodrome Track

By William L. Slout

*This paper was presented at the 2000 Circus Historical Society convention.*

From the very beginnings of the American circus there was what could be called a "one-ring mentality" with both circus people and with the general public. The earliest indoor circus venues, in Europe and in America, were circular, erected to encompass a single ring. Because the ring was the sole focus for audiences and because construction space was a premium concern, the seating area abutted the ring curbing. This arrangement created an intimacy between audience and performer and allowed for equitable viewing from every seat in the amphitheatre.

When circuses adapted the canvas pavilion for moving about the country, the round tops imitated the configuration of the permanent buildings. The single ring within a small circular enclosure, then, was thoroughly ingrained as the standard form for circus performance, and represented this "one-ring mentality" that was prevalent up to and throughout the 1870s.

Many of us have been under the assumption that P. T. Barnum's Great Traveling World's Fair originated the use of a second ring for circus performances in 1872. In part, the confusion was caused by the Barnum advertising for that year that frequently included the line: "The first and only show in the world that uses a double circus ring, and requires a double circus troupe of performers." Such a reference can be found in newspapers from Clinton, Iowa, to Baltimore, Maryland. In the *Toledo Blade*,

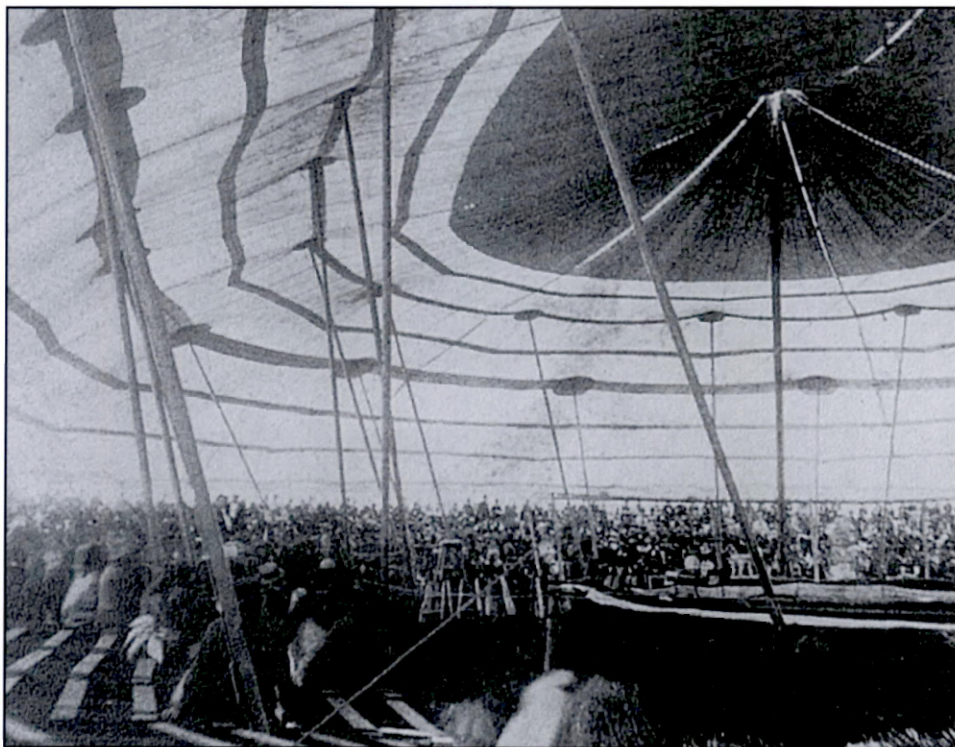
for example, it was stated that "there are seen at one time in the great double ring, in the Grand Entree Pageant, one hundred performers," etc.<sup>1</sup> The *Lodi, Wisconsin Journal* included a reference to "a double set of performers, a double circus ring." But notice that the term "double ring" is used, rather than "two rings." The former could be interpreted to mean one inside the other, the latter to mean rings side by side. Be that as it may, it is understandable why the notion of a two-ring performance was erroneously accepted.<sup>2</sup>

I will show that there were not two rings with simultaneous performances with the Barnum show, or any other circus, in 1872; but that

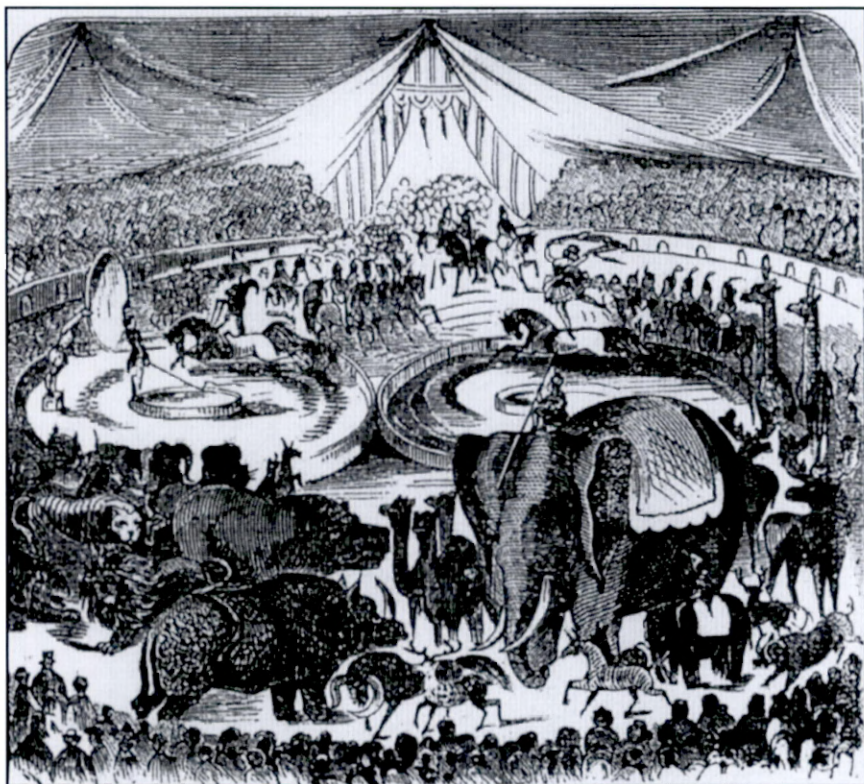
Inside the P. T. Barnum's Great Traveling World's Fair in 1872. Library of Congress collection.

it was 1873 when the two-ring circus was first used.

For the Barnum's 1872 opener at the Empire Rink in New York City, there was but one performing ring. In reporting on it, the *New York Clipper* noted that the living curiosities were "exhibited in the ring at the commencement of the circus performances," with no mention of a second ring.<sup>3</sup> In referring to the circus in Cleveland, the *Plain Dealer* contained the line, "Dan Castello's famous circus (which was the performing wing of the Barnum show), under the care and direction of that veteran himself, occupies the ring."<sup>4</sup> The *Ring*. One cannot find a reference to two rings in either the Barnum 1872 route book or *Advance Courier*. Nor is there a reference in the full page ad placed in the *Clipper* at the outset of the 1872







Grand Entree of Barnum's Greatest Show on Earth as pictured in the 1873 advance courier. Pfening Archives.

season, which contains Barnum's forty-seven challenges.<sup>5</sup> Out of those many boasts you would think two rings would have been included if there were two.

Our conclusion, and one we will continue to support in this paper, is that the second ring inference relates to the increased space between the ring and the audience, created by the use of a larger canvas pavilion to accommodate an extended seating area. This space, which formed a ring around the ring, was for circuses the origin of what we now refer to as the hippodrome track. Therefore, the true explanation for the advertisements of two rings in 1872 is that there was a new performing area around the single ring that could be used for greater spectacle.

There are contemporary illustrations to support this view. A small engraving in the 1872 Barnum Advance Courier shows the Grand Entree, entitled "The Halt in the Desert," being paraded within the single ring. Although this supports our one-ring theory, it is of no help in confirming the use of an outer ring

for spectacle. Our explanation is that the same Grand Entree was used in 1871 and that the engraving was made for the 1871 season and carried over into the 1872.

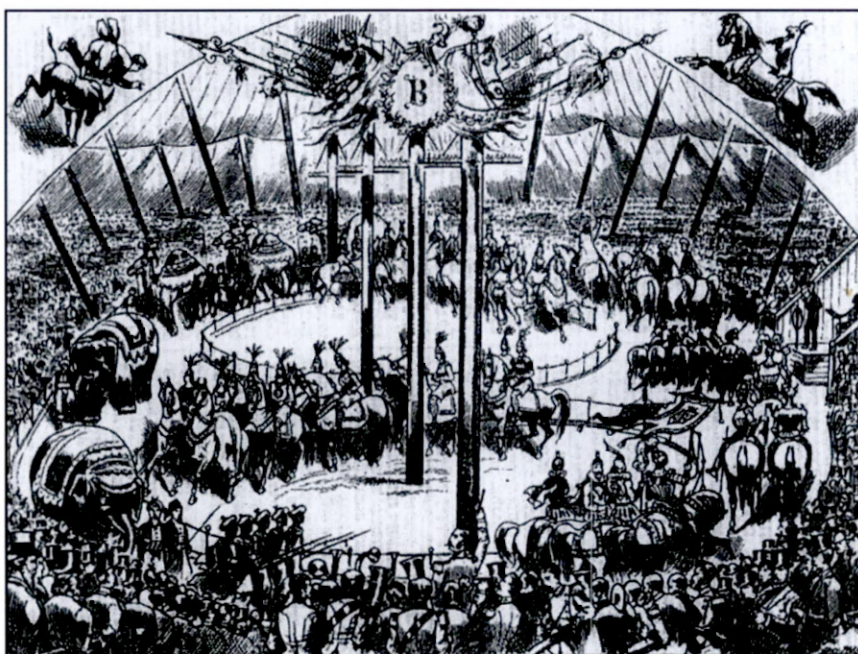
From the Morris H. Porter photograph of the exterior of the tent, taken in Kalamazoo, Michigan, on October 24, 1872, we know that there were two center-poles and a canvas middle piece of some fifty or more

feet, ideal for a single ring.

But even more convincing is a stereoview of the tent's interior, entered into the Library of Congress in 1873 by A. W. Anderson, which graphically reveals a single ring surrounded by usable space between it and the tiers of seating.<sup>6</sup> This has to be the 1872 tent because only a single center-pole was used in 1871 and, as we will show later, there were decidedly two rings and three center-poles in 1873.

The gist of the 1872 advertisements was repeated in 1873 when three rings were prominently proclaimed. Newspapers referred to three circus troupes and three separate and distinct rings, seen by the whole audience simultaneously. For example, an article in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* stated there would be "three rings and at times there [would] be performances in all three at once."<sup>7</sup> The *Buffalo Daily Courier* confirmed this with: "Under the vast Hippodrome Pavilion are three rings, one of which is used entirely for the Grand Oriental Pageant, and the others for the performances that follow. In the two rings two acts go on simultaneously, but the salient and brilliant features of the act in one

This drawing of the Barnum Grand Entree appeared in the *New York Daily Graphic* on October 28, 1873. Author's collection.





ring are so admirably timed with reference to those in the other that confusion is entirely avoided."<sup>8</sup> And the Jackson, Michigan *Daily Citizen* reiterated: "In this tent there are three separate and distinct circus rings, with three separate and distinct sets of performers and performances, all in progress at the same time."<sup>9</sup> The New York *Clipper*, reporting on the Boston stand, stated that "the novelty of seeing three rings in action at once is alone worth the price of admission."<sup>10</sup> Note the word "novelty."

The Advance Courier for 1873 stated: "Two of these arenas or circus rings will be in operation by two different sets of performances, at the same time . . . while the third vast ring, larger than either of the others, will be used exclusively for the Grand Entree Pageant, Tournament, etc., and other spectacular demonstrations." The third ring, then, was what we now call the hippodrome track. From this, it is safe to assume that the second 1872 ring was not one of two rings where simultaneous performances were given; but rather, it was an outer ring in which, perhaps for the first time in America, the Grand Entree expanded from the confinement of the performing ring to the origin of the hippodrome track.

At other times the 1873 ads mentioned only "grand double hippodrome performances in separate and distinct rings in full view of the audience."<sup>11</sup> The *Clipper* Supplement, in its annual preseason circus listings, revealed that: "A squad of twenty men under. Charles McDeane (sic) will go one day in advance to prepare the grounds and make the double rings used by this company."<sup>12</sup> The New York *Times*, in commenting on the first stand of the season at the American Institute (the Rink), observed that "two large rings are formed, and the audience occupies raised seats around them. . . . Similar performances occur simultaneously in each ring, so that the whole audience can see one or both, as it chooses."<sup>13</sup> From the Battle Creek, Michigan *Daily Journal*: "The performance comes off in two large rings."<sup>14</sup> An advertisement in the New York *Daily Graphic* included,



An illustration of Barnum's show that appeared in the Rochester, New York *Evening Express* on June 21, 1873. Author's collection.

"Two separate and distinct circus arenas in simultaneous performance."<sup>15</sup> The Pittsburgh *Post* commented about the center of the tent being "occupied by two large rings."<sup>16</sup> The *Clipper*, also reporting on the Pittsburgh date, revealed that "two rings and simultaneous performances in the circus were a new feature."<sup>17</sup> Again, I call your attention to the words "new feature," and be aware that the circus played Pittsburgh in 1872 as well. Concerning a four day stand in Cincinnati, the *Clipper* reinforces our thesis with: "The show has been considerably enlarged since its visit last year, particularly in the circus department, where two rings are filled with a constant succession of performances of an unusually varied description."<sup>18</sup>

Barnum's 1873 Advance Courier stresses the double ring configuration and includes an artist's sketch of it, which also shows a hippodrome track. An engraving in the New York *Daily Graphic* of October 28, 1873, depicts simultaneous performances in two rings and a hippodrome track.

It is irrefutably true that the Barnum show of 1873 was the first to make use of two rings placed side by side. That is a given.

There is another, perhaps more compelling, reason for the misunderstanding about the number of rings in 1872. It is based on a statement made by W. C. Coup in his book, *Sawdust and Spangles*. His entry is

open to misinterpretation. It is commonly known that the book attributed to Coup's authorship is a composite of dictated notes by him, which was published after his death. We have no assurance that the various entrees are in chronological order or how one section connects to another. His two ring statement comes in the opening sentence of a new section, the section title being "The Spartan Habits of the Old-Timers." It reads: "Our experience with the vast crowds of the season before had given us the idea of building two rings and giving a double performance."<sup>19</sup> Which season before? Granted the previous section describes the switch to rail transportation in 1872, which could lead one to believe that the following section is a continuance of the same year and that the "year before" to which Coup referred was 1871, which would make 1872 the year he moved to two rings. But it is possible that the two sections are not time-connected, are not referring to the same year. It is unfortunate that Coup did not assemble his writing into a book himself and expand on the jottings that he put down.

Dan Castello, one of the Barnum partners at the time has been of no help in placing the year. His only statement regarding two rings was within an article in a Syracuse paper: "Barnum came to me and asked what we were going to do, as the canvas was getting so big that the people could not see. I told him that we would have to put in two rings."<sup>20</sup> When did Barnum come to him? I have no idea. We do know the tent was longer for the season of 1872 by at the very least a middle piece, thereby putting the end seats at a greater distance than those on the sides; and, in so doing, creating a problem for the end-seated audiences.

This seating problem was referred to by Coup directly following his statement on adding a second ring. "This, of course, doubled our company, but it kept the audience in their seats, since they were precisely as well off in one part of the canvas as another, whereas in the old one-ring show we found it impossible to pre-



vent the people who were farthest from the ring from standing up. They would rush to the front and thus interfere with many other people."<sup>21</sup> They rushed to the front, we believe, because the addition of a middle piece that year, 1872, as we have said, created a greater distance from the ring for audiences placed in the end seats. But the purpose of the added canvas was not to make use of a second ring; it was to seat more people by enlarging the perimeter. In doing so the crowd-management problem was created.

This was corroborated by press agent Louis E. Cooke, who worked for the Barnum and Bailey organization for several years and who was also well acquainted with Coup. Cooke confirmed that the introduction of two rings came after the enlargement of the pavilion and from the necessity "to keep the people seated at the extreme ends of the big canvas, as it was found that with only one ring crowds on the end seats would become restless, leave their seats and rush to the center, making it impossible for the balance of the audience to see the performance."<sup>22</sup>

The adding of the second ring, as Coup said, doubled the company. But in looking at the performing roster for 1872, the year previously assumed the show had gone to two rings, we find little difference in size from 1871. On the other hand, Stuart Thayer has described the 1873 program as one of the largest seen to that time, with sixteen changes, all but three involving both rings."<sup>23</sup> Richard A. Arnold published the route books for both the 1872 and 1873 seasons. But only for 1873 are the acts shown as they appeared in both ring one and ring two.

Strong evidence establishes 1873 as the year of the first touring two ring American circus. P. T. Barnum's Great Traveling World's Fair, a wagon show managed by John V. "Pogey" O'Brien, continued the practice for 1874. With that, the Barnum people did not use more than one ring until 1881 when the newly consolidated Barnum, Bailey & Co.'s Great London Show placed three rings side by side for the very first time in circus history.

#### NOTES

1. Toledo *Blade*, June 29, 1872, n.p.n.
2. The idea was perpetuated by C. Fred Crosby in his 1922 *Billboard* article, "The Early Days of Barnum's 'Greatest on Earth'," *Billboard*, January 21, 1922, p. 49.
3. New York *Clipper*, April 13, 1872, p. 14.
4. Cleveland *Plain Dealer*, June 18, 1872, p. 3.
5. New York *Clipper*, April 19, 1872, p. 24.
6. Original copies in the Albert Conover collection, Circus World Museum
7. Cleveland *Plain Dealer*, July 14, 1873, p. 3.
8. *Buffalo Daily Courier*, July 2, 1873, p. 3.
9. *Jackson Daily Citizen*, May 10, 1873, p. 4.
10. New York *Clipper*, May 24, 1873, p. 63.
11. Providence *Daily Journal*, May 6, 1873, p. 3.
12. New York *Clipper* Supplement, April 19, 1873, p. 1.
13. *New York Times*, April 4, 1873, n.p.n.
14. Battle Creek *Daily Journal*, July 18, 1873, p. 4.
15. The New York *Daily Graphic*, October 17, 1873, p. 760.
16. Pittsburgh *Post*, July 9, 1873, p. 4.
17. New York *Clipper*, July 19, 1873, p. 127.
18. New York *Clipper*, August 2, 1873, p. 143.
19. Coup, p. 63.
20. Clipping, Syracuse *Standard*, 1899, n.p.n.
21. Coup, *op. cit.*, p. 63.
22. Louis E. Cooke, "Reminiscences of a Show-man," Newark *Evening Star*, August 19, 1915, n.p.n.
23. Thayer and Slout, *Grand Entree*, p. 53.



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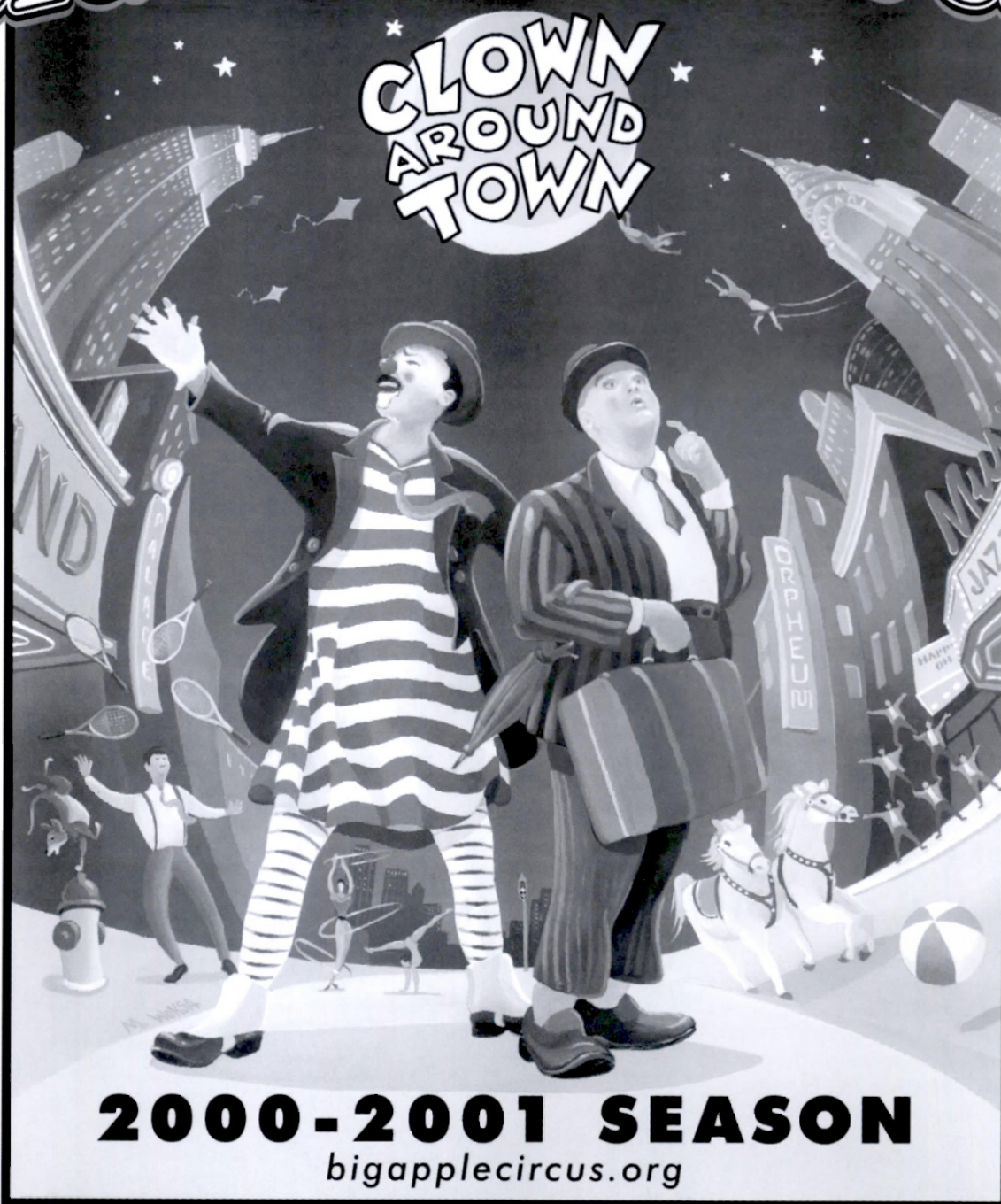


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# MANCHESTER'S "COMMODORE" GEORGE WASHINGTON MORRISON NUTT MYTH VERSUS REALITY

By A. H. Saxon

Nearly everyone is familiar with the name of P. T. Barnum, and most people also recognize that of "General" Tom Thumb, if only because of the recent Broadway musical and a number of television specials that attempt to trace the famous showman's life and career. Less well-known today but in the 19th century equally familiar to the public was another of Barnum's prodigies: the Manchester, New Hampshire, native George Washington Morrison Nutt, better known to the world as "Commodore" Nutt, but originally—on account of the sum Barnum claimed he was forced to pay in return for his services—the "30 Thousand-Dollar Nutt." Like Tom Thumb, he was a dwarf, of perfect proportions, and legally a minor when Barnum began exhibiting him in 1862. As is true for so many things connected with the notorious "Prince of Humbugs," a goodly number of apocryphal tales have accumulated around the tiny Nutt, until today it is often difficult to separate fact from fiction. This paper is an attempt to do just that—or perhaps I should say, is an attempt to crack that proverbial "hard nut."

Take, to begin with, the agreement for the "Commodore's" services between Barnum and the boy's father, Major Rodnia Nutt, who seems to have been a fairly well-to-do farmer. As part of his campaign to trumpet his latest discovery to the world, Barnum released to the newspapers some correspondence between himself and the agent he had presumably chosen to negotiate with the elder Nutt—but only after he

was certain he had secured the "Commodore." Much of this correspondence was obviously written with the press in mind, and it is here that we find the source of all that wonderful hyperbole about the "30 Thousand-Dollar Nutt." The person charged with the negotiations was in fact a lawyer-neighbor of the Nutts with the rather odd name of B. P. Cilley (spelled with a "C"), although when it came to the correspondence that was later published in the nation's newspapers, Barnum gave out his agent as being Parson Fordyce Hitchcock, a friend and sometime Universalist minister

"Commodore" Nutt in his naval uniform, together with Minnie Warren, the sister of Mrs. Tom Thumb, as they appeared around 1863. Private Collection.

whom he employed on several other occasions. In one of his published letters to this supposed emissary, Barnum instructed him to "nail" the tiny Nutt before any rival showman could get to the father, and emphasized his willingness to go as high as thirty thousand dollars for the privilege of exhibiting the "Commodore" for three years.<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately for this legend, the actual contract between Barnum and Nutt's father turned up several years ago. The precise terms of this agreement—signed by Barnum and Major Nutt on 12 December 1861, a full month *before* the cooked-up letter addressed to Hitchcock offering to go as high as \$30,000—appear to have been unknown until I published them in my 1989 biography of Barnum. In lieu of the universally broadcast sum, here one learns that, in return for the services of both the "Commodore" and his elder brother, Rodnia Jr., over a period of *five* years (not three), Barnum agreed to pay \$12 a week during their first year with him plus 10 percent of the proceeds from the sale of souvenir items—which customarily included such things as pamphlets, tokens, and photographs or cartes de visite—with a guarantee that the total from this secondary source of income would amount to no less than \$260

over the course of the year.

All this was in addition to the cost of the boys' room and board; their clothing, travel, and medical expenses; plus whatever else Barnum might lay out for their "education." The sums were to increase progressively over the next 4 years, eventually amounting to \$30 in the case of the weekly salary and \$440 for the annual guarantee against souvenir sales; and at the end of the five-year period, provided they had faithfully performed their part of the bargain, the Nutts were to receive, as a kind of bonus, a miniature carriage and a pair of ponies.<sup>2</sup>

According to my calculations, the brothers stood to





receive the contractual sum of \$6,560 over the five years of their agreement, which was considerably less than the \$30,000 for three years' work mentioned in Barnum's publicity materials. Depending on souvenir sales, they might very well have made more than this amount, but hardly so much as Barnum boasted about in the press. All the same, taking into account their living expenses and all the other perks and benefits the two Nutts received, the agreement was by no means a bad deal for them and their father. At the time of the "Commodore's" engagement, e.g., one could spend an entire day at Barnum's American Museum in lower Manhattan—the 19th-century equivalent of Disneyland—for 25 cents, and only half that amount if a child.

In addition to these monetary considerations, Barnum promised to exercise a "healthful influence" over the boys' morals and to educate them in the "3 R's"—and I have no doubt he kept his word about the latter, at least, since I have seen an early epistolary exercise, dating from February 1862, from the "Commodore" to the folks back home—written, one imagines, while some implacable schoolmaster (possibly Barnum himself) was standing over him—repeatedly assuring them that he and his brother Rodnia are "well" and expressing the hope that father Nutt and just about everyone else in Manchester are also "well." Another letter, this time from Barnum to the "Commodore" while the latter was on the road in early 1864, humorously advises the boy about "picking" the public's pocket in order to lay up lots of money, but also stresses the need for him to avoid bad habits such as drinking and swearing, to continue to apply himself to his academic studies while at the same time perfecting his stage performances, and pleads for a letter in return. Both the "Commodore" and his brother officially began their association with Barnum on 20 January 1862, incidentally—a date that is additionally confirmed by an entry in a diary kept by Rodnia Jr. that is now in the Manchester Historic Association.

How old and how tall, precisely, was the "Commodore" at the time of



An early costume worn by Nutt—perhaps the very first—said to have been ordered for him by his original manager, William C. Walker. Courtesy of the Manchester Historic Association.

this initial engagement? Here, too, one encounters considerable confusion, for which Barnum, again, may be at least partly responsible. When the showman began exhibiting the Connecticut-born Tom Thumb, for example, the infant "General" was not quite five years old. Fearing the public would not believe so young a child was really a dwarf, Barnum added seven years to his age, and for good measure (since foreigners, to the eternal shame of Americans, always fare so much better than native performers in this country) made him English. The "Englishness" soon wore off, but the added years persisted for so long and became so much a part of the "General's" legend that at times, I suspect, even he wasn't certain how old he was. Charles Sherwood Stratton, alias "Tom Thumb," had in fact been born in 1838; began his long association with Barnum toward the end of 1842; and died at Middleboro, Massachusetts, in 1883.

"Commodore" Nutt was reported in the *New York Times* and elsewhere at the time of his death as having been born in 1844, a year I myself accepted when I published my edition of *The Autobiography of Mrs. Tom Thumb*. When he made his debut at the American Museum in 1862, he was described as then being 18 years old, which would support such a date.

However, Mr. L. Ashton Thorp, the author of *Manchester of Yesterday* who researched the history and genealogy of the Nutts and had access to a family Bible, reports that it was actually a daughter, Mary, who was born into the Nutt household in 1844, and that the "Commodore" did not make his debut until four years later—i.e., in 1848—on, perhaps significantly, April Fools' Day.<sup>3</sup> Mr. Thorp was not the first person to comment on this discrepancy. A contemporary newspaper account of the "Commodore's" funeral in 1881 reported that although "the family record shows that he was four years younger or 33," a plate on his coffin gave his age at death as 37 years, 1 month, and 25 days. Evidently the added years stuck to the "Commodore" until the very end of his life, and conceivably he was as uncertain about his true age as Tom Thumb sometimes appears to have been about his.

Another tale that continues to make the rounds is that Barnum never published the "Commodore's" measurements, but that his brother Rodnia insisted he was two inches shorter than Tom Thumb. Wrong on both counts, I'm afraid. As early as 1862, the first year of Nutt's engagement with Barnum, there was one of those souvenir pamphlets for sale—*History of Commodore Nutt, The Smallest Man in the World*—whose title page proclaimed his height to be 29 inches and his weight 24 pounds. The pamphlet was authorized and perhaps even written by Barnum, whose journalistic skills were considerable; and if these figures are not altogether reliable, we may be reasonably certain they err on the side of *littleness* rather than bigness, and that the "Commodore" was consequently no *less* than the published figures. Tom Thumb, at the time of his debut with Barnum in 1842, stood around 24 inches tall and weighed some 15 pounds. But then the "General" was only four years old at the time, while the "Commodore" began with Barnum when he was all of thirteen.

In the end, such figures are not so important as they initially may seem, for even dwarfs acquire both inches and pounds as they age—a



frequent cause of concern to both themselves and their managers. When he died in 1883, Tom Thumb stood all of 40 inches tall and had developed into a portly gentleman of 75 pounds. His age at the time was 45. "Commodore" Nutt was reported to measure 43 inches in height and to weigh an estimated 50 pounds at the time of his death. But he only lived to the age of 33. Photographs dating from the 1870s in which the "General" and "Commodore" appear together indicate Nutt was definitely the taller of the two, so he obviously outstripped the "General," at least in the height department.

It's also worth noting—although this, too, goes against common belief—that Barnum was hardly the first showman to exhibit the tiny Nutt. In the correspondence addressed to the agent who was negotiating for him, he refers several times to a person named "Lillie," whose inept handling of the boy, in contrast to how masterfully Barnum would present him, was to be pointed out to the father, naturally enough. "Mr. Nutt," Barnum wrote to Cilley, "ought to be assured of the fact that Lillie is not competent to elevate the thing above a mere tuppenny show—low, common, and unattractive—and that *much valuable reputation* will be gained for the little fellow if he is put in training by the right man."<sup>4</sup>

Other materials I have seen relating to Nutt's pre-Barnum career mention a Manchester-based showman named William C. Walker, who claimed to have been the very first to exhibit Nutt, along with his elder brother Rodnia, as early as 1854. Barnum never liked the idea of following in another's footsteps and, unless he could not avoid it, rarely acknowledged predecessors. The same held true for another of his famous dwarfs, the former Massachusetts schoolteacher Mercy Lavinia Warren Bump, whose name Barnum wisely abbreviated to "Lavinia Warren," and who was soon to become even better known to the world as "Mrs. General Tom Thumb." Barnum represented her as having been "discovered" by him, too, when in fact, as Lavinia informs us in her autobiography,

she had already been exhibited by a cousin who operated a showboat on the western rivers.

Nutt's brother Rodnia, incidentally, is sometimes confused with the boys' father, since he was not always distinguished by "Jr." He, too, was a dwarf, although hardly so short as the "Commodore" (in 1862, when he was 21 years old, he was described as standing a little over 4 feet). Rodnia kept an eye on his younger brother's interests and sometimes served as his coachman, driving the miniature carriages in which the "Commodore" toolled about. In time he became a theatrical ticket agent in Boston and then a realtor in the Boston suburb of Dorchester, where he lived into the 20th century and was married to a normal-size woman with whom he had several children. All of the other children born to the elder Rodnia Nutt and his two wives were of at least normal height.

There are other suspect tales concerning the juvenile Nutt, among them his reputed rivalry with Tom Thumb for the hand of Lavinia Warren. Billed as "The Queen of Beauty" and "The Smallest Woman Alive," Lavinia commenced her association with Barnum only a few

The "Queen of Beauty," Lavinia Warren, as she appeared around the time of her original engagement with Barnum in 1862. Private Collection.



months after Nutt did.<sup>5</sup> Barnum told an involved, hilarious tale of the epic battle over Lavinia in a two-part article he contributed to *Packard's Monthly* magazine and then reprinted in the second (1869) edition of his famous autobiography—detailing, among other things, a knock-down fight the two males supposedly had backstage at the American Museum (the overweight, out-of-shape "General" was no match for the feisty "Commodore"); a richly embroidered description of how Tom Thumb went about proposing to Lavinia at Barnum's mansion in Bridgeport, including the very words that passed between the little couple on this historic occasion, followed by a sound similar to the "popping of several corks from as many beer bottles" after Lavinia consented (all of this witnessed, Barnum coyly writes, by two unobserved "mischievous young ladies"); Nutt's arriving at the mansion later the same night and barging into Barnum's bedroom to raise hell when he learned his rival was in the house; followed by his sulking over the General's success and refusing to have anything to do with the wedding; &c. &c.—all of which *may* be true, at least in broad outline. But as the showman and no doubt a portion of his public were undoubtedly aware, at the time all this was supposed to have occurred the "Commodore" was barely into his teens, while Lavinia, who was born in 1841, was a mature young woman of twenty-one and Tom Thumb was three years her senior.

Nutt's interest in Lavinia, if it ever existed, was a classic case of "puppy love"; and it's also worth pointing out that not only did he serve as Tom Thumb's best man, but that almost immediately following the wedding he also joined the Thumbs and Lavinia's younger sister, Minnie Warren, to tour (quite literally) the world over the next decade. Lavinia herself, who in her writings and later lectures before the DAR and other organizations never tired of recounting the history of her marriage to Tom Thumb, makes no mention of any rivalry for her hand in any source that I am



familiar with; and during all the years they were on the road together, I also can find no hint that the two "rival pigmies," as Barnum rather insensitively called them, were on other than the friendliest terms.

The famous wedding took place on 10 February 1863 in New York City's Grace Church and was described in the nation's papers as the grand social event of the season. The church was packed with the cream of New York society, along with Civil War generals, politicians, and other luminaries; and despite rumors that have persisted to the present day, Barnum—who assumed all the expenses for this celebrated event—did *not* sell tickets to it! "I had promised to give the couple a genteel and graceful wedding," he writes in his autobiography, "and I kept my word." "Genteel" for the most part it undoubtedly was, but what an unusual spectacle it must have presented! The "Commodore," as mentioned, appeared as Tom Thumb's best man; and Lavinia's sister Minnie Warren, who was also a dwarf and even tinier than she, was the bridesmaid. When the diminutive bridal party came marching down the aisle before ascending the specially built dais at the front of the church, many of the distinguished guests not only stood but actually climbed onto the pew benches to get a better view. Mathew Brady made a famous series of photographs of what came to be termed "The Fairy Wedding"; one of them was the basis for a well-known Currier & Ives print of the bridal party; and there were any number of other illustrations published in the newspapers of the day. The wedding was followed by an equally lavish reception for over two thousand guests at the Metropolitan Hotel, where the gifts to the little couple were on display—including a pair a Chinese fire screens sent by the Lincolns, who could not attend the wedding but were soon to receive the newlyweds at the White House.

All four members of the wedding party were examples of perfectly pro-



"The Fairy Wedding." Mathew Brady's famous photograph of the 1863 bridal party that also served as the basis for a Currier & Ives print. Private Collection.

portioned or "ateliotic" dwarfism—what many well-meaning people today refer to as "midgets." But the correct medical term for all such individuals, whether perfectly proportioned or not, is "dwarf"; and as repugnant as the word may seem to many of us, this is the term the organization known as The Little People of America urges all its members to use. "Midget," as the secretary of the LPA once pointed out to me, is considered too condescending or "cute"; and for the same reason some members of this organization even object to being called "little people." Barnum himself had no qualms about referring to Tom Thumb and "Commodore" Nutt as "dwarfs," although toward the end of the century he occasionally substituted the word "midget." The latter term, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, was first used in reference to small persons around 1870.

While on this topic, I might add that in all the years I have been researching and writing about him, I have never found any evidence of Barnum's abusing or cheating such individuals. Many of them—such as Tom Thumb, who developed a passion for fast horses, steam yachts, and diamonds—became quite well-off through their association with Barnum; and all of them, I dare say, attained a degree of independence and a sense of personal worth that they very well might not have achieved had they never entered

upon a career in "show business." Barnum may have joked about his Lilliputian actors and at times imperiously referred to them as "my dwarfs," but I am convinced he felt genuine respect and affection for them. And as one learns from numerous remarks in Lavinia's autobiography, from Tom Thumb's offer to help his old friend when Barnum went bankrupt in the 1850s, and from numerous other sources, these feelings appear to have been reciprocated.

The showman wasn't lying when he insisted he had not made money out of the wedding ceremony; but he and all the others associated with this event made plenty from it both before and afterwards. After the Thumbs had been permitted some time for a honeymoon, Barnum sent the entire quartet to Europe and around the U. S. and Canada; and at the end of the decade, only a few weeks following the completion of the first transcontinental railroad, on a three-year tour around the world that took in not only California, Oregon, and Brigham Young and his many wives, but also Japan and China; Singapore, Hong Kong, and Macao; Australia and Tasmania; India and Ceylon; Arabia and Egypt; and Europe all over again. It was truly a remarkable accomplishment, as well as a tribute to both the stamina and congeniality of the company, for on this one tour alone they journeyed over 55,000 miles and appeared 1,471 times in 587 different cities and towns without missing a single performance. And this, of course, was before the advent of automobiles or airplanes.

The "fairy wedding" was always played up in the advertisements for the troupe's entertainments; and it soon became customary to include an infant that was said to be the Thumbs' "baby"—though in fact Tom and Lavinia never had any children and the baby in question was nothing more than a "borrowed" infant whose nationality was likely to change



depending on whatever country the quartet was visiting. "Thus we exhibited English babies in England, French babies in France, and German babies in Germany," Lavinia confessed in an interview many years later. "It was—they were—a great success." In a playbill I have seen for one of their appearances in England in 1865, the company is described as consisting of "The Four Smallest Mature Human Beings ever known on the face of the Globe . . . A Married Couple, A Bachelor & a Belle, All Four Weighing a Trifle over 100 Pounds."<sup>6</sup> The Thumbs' "infant daughter" is advertised in the same bill; and on this visit to Europe even Queen Victoria, as one learns from an entry in her diary, was not spared the imposition.

To further advertise themselves and their performances once they had arrived in a town, it was customary for the party to travel about in miniature carriages drawn by Shetland ponies, with children or other dwarfs serving as coachmen and footmen. Tom Thumb had several of these carriages that were of conventional design; but the one Barnum commissioned for the "Commodore" at the start of his career was truly unique: a coach whose body was shaped like the shell of an English walnut, the upper half of which, split in two and hinged at both ends, could open—landau-like—to reveal the tiny "Nutt" inside. This was the carriage originally driven by the "Commodore's" brother Rodnia Jr.; and one can easily imagine the sensation it created when rolling about the streets of New York or any other city.<sup>7</sup>

The nature of the performances given by "Commodore" Nutt and other members of the Tom Thumb troupe—"entertainments" or "levees," as they were generally termed by Lavinia—introduces another topic that is often misunderstood or misrepresented by people pretending to knowledge of such things. All too often we are led to believe that Barnum was the heartless exploiter of the human oddities he managed, and that these poor, downtrodden individuals were exhibited much the same as the stuffed animals and other curiosities in the showman's

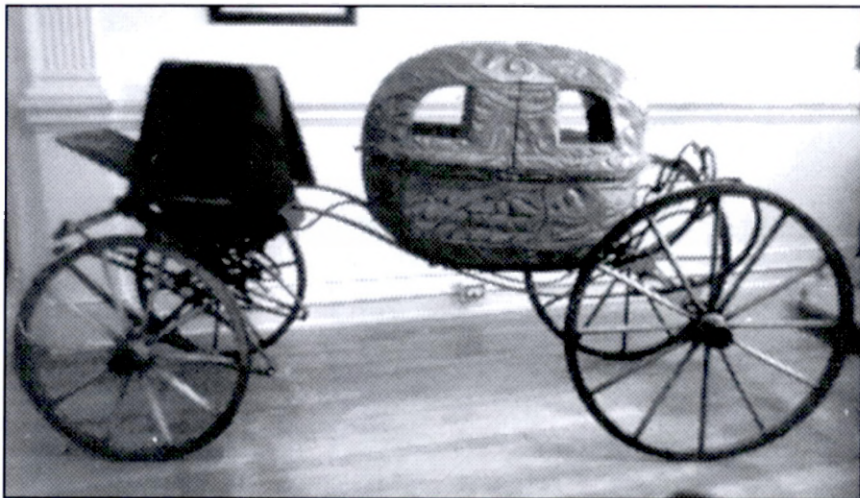
museums—i.e., as though they themselves were inanimate objects, merely to be gawked at by a curious and at times disgusted public. In one recent collection of essays on the topic published by an academic press, Tom Thumb is actually described as being a "tragic" individual.

Admittedly, this impression derives in large measure from the 20th-century sideshows and debased "freak" shows that were formerly attached to nearly all circuses and carnivals. I myself grew up while such things were the rule and have many vivid memories of them (I also invariably enjoyed them, which no doubt points to some fault in my character). In fact, however, these later exhibitions have virtually nothing in common with the "entertainments" of "Commodore" Nutt, "General" Tom Thumb, and all the other odd individuals—dwarfs, giants, or otherwise—who at various times formed a part of their circle. To begin with, such entertainments were almost never connected with circuses or sideshows, but were independent affairs, given in regular theatres or halls, that might best be described as "vaudeville" or "variety" programs. Sufficiently long to qualify as full-length matinee or evening performances, they typically included songs and dances; impersonations of historical, mythological, or ethnic characters; brief comic sketches or burlesques in which the entire company would participate; wisecracks with a normal-size manager who played the role of the straightman

and whose height served to emphasize the smallness of the others; and interaction with members of the audience (children, e.g., who might be invited to come up onto the stage to compare their heights with those of the little people). In addition, the company might include one or more "normal" performers—a juggler, perhaps, or a magician or ventriloquist—to round out and lend variety to the program. There were changes of costume in the course of a performance, sets and props to haul about (not to mention the miniature carriages and their ponies, which, as an additional advertisement, would be parked in front of the theatre), musicians to supply an accompaniment—the same as was true for any other "road" company of the time. Obviously, then, these were fairly sophisticated operations, and the persons associated with them needed to be thoroughly professional.

And indeed, both the "Commodore" and Tom Thumb possessed considerable histrionic talent, with the person in charge of their initial instruction in this realm being none other than "Professor" Barnum. I imagine this to have been at least as good an education as one can get today at Yale's prestigious School of Drama! The "Commodore," Barnum confided in letters to his friends at the time, appeared to be even brighter and cleverer than his predecessor, Tom Thumb, whom he resembled to such a degree that many people mistook

The walnut-shaped carriage Barnum had made for the "Commodore."





him for the "General" before the latter put on pounds and inches. He also appears to have possessed his fair share of wit—or at least so Barnum, who gives a famous example of this in his autobiography, would have us believe. Almost immediately following the "Commodore's" debut in New York, he writes, he was taken to Washington to meet President Lincoln, who always manifested a sympathetic interest in such individuals and was not above an occasional wisecrack of his own.

The "Commodore" was in his naval uniform, naturally; and the President, taking him by the hand, advised him to "wade ashore" if he should ever find himself in danger of being taken prisoner while commanding his "fleet." Slowly surveying the length of the Presidential legs, the "Commodore" replied, "I guess, Mr. President, you could do that better than I could."

"Commodore" Nutt's personal repertoire included comic songs, dances, and exhibitions of drumming (there was a fascination with "drummer boys" during the Civil War period); and, following the pattern earlier established by Tom Thumb, "Grecian Statues" or "poses plastiques," in which he struck attitudes in imitation of famous works of art while wearing an elastic body stocking to simulate nudity and display his perfect proportions. These attitudes included such subjects as Atlas bearing the heavens on his shoulders; Cain killing his brother Abel; Ajax defying the thunder; Cupid and the maiden; and the Roman Gladiator. Wearing appropriate costumes, he also impersonated historical characters such as Napoleon and Washington, although the former character was usually associated with Tom Thumb, who was able to continue as the plump Emperor long after he had been forced to give up in the elastic body-stocking department. Following another tradition begun by the "General," the "Commodore" made a great show of kissing the ladies in the audience—or perhaps it was the other way round, since many women simply could not resist fondling such doll-like figures. Very early in his career,



The same "quartet" as they appeared a few years later while they were touring. By now the "Commodore" is clearly taller than Tom Thumb. Private Collection.

too, costumed as a soldier during the American Revolution and bearing a tiny musket, he demonstrated the manual of arms, whose exact order was outlined in a diary entry by his brother Rodnia.

These were all "solo" numbers that could be presented by the "Commodore" whenever he was appearing on his own, although, again, there would customarily be some comic exchanges with his manager of the moment, who would also introduce the "Commodore" and supply the audience with information on his family history and background. When appearing in New York City at Barnum's American Museum, which had its own stage and well-equipped theatre, he was sometimes paired with Tom Thumb, with the two billed as "The Two Dromios"; or with the giant "Colonel" Goshen, whom he would vanquish in a burlesque version of "Jack and the Beanstalk." When touring with the Tom Thumb Troupe in the 1860s and 70s, he was paired with Lavinia's sister Minnie Warren, for whom he was also rumored to entertain romantic feelings. Together they would sing duets with such engaging titles as "Matrimonial Sweets" and "Dost Thou Love Me, Sister Ruth?"<sup>8</sup> On the same program the "Commodore" would favor audiences with such rollicking solo ditties as "The Reformed Drunkard" ("My heart was filled with sorrow, / So I got drunk again") and the cockney song "Vilikins and His Dinah."

From all this it becomes apparent that "Commodore" Nutt, as Barnum had promised, did indeed escape the stigma of being a mere "tuppenny show" and developed into a genuine thespian. As was true for actors in the legitimate theatre, too, he was sometimes honored by his admirers and professional colleagues with benefits and testimonials. One interesting gift he received while he was on the three-year world tour was a miniature bowling ball presented to him by the Fitzroy Bowling Club of Victoria, Australia. The "Commodore" remained an avid bowler until the end of his life, and this particular object, along with a small collection of other memorabilia, is today in the Manchester Historic Association.

In the late 1870s "Commodore" Nutt struck out on his own; but as so often happened when Barnum's entertainers left his expert management, this fling at independence does not appear to have been all that successful. A number of sources mention his trying his hand at saloon-keeping in several western states and New York City—an occupation he consistently failed at, presumably on account of his size, which prevented him from breaking up fights among his rowdier patrons; although other evidence suggests the "Commodore" was just as likely to begin these brawls on his own. For it would seem he did not adhere very long to "Professor" Barnum's moral precepts, and that, in addition to acquiring a healthy taste for tobacco, he went off on a good many drunken sprees.

According to his brother Rodnia, he was also the first to get up "Lilliputian" opera companies, which became popular in the second half of the century. The high-pitched, quavering voices of the diminutive members of such troupes seem to have struck 19th- and early 20th-century audiences as particularly droll, and one can still arrive at some idea of what such entertainments were like thanks to the singing and dancing of the "Munchkins" in the 1930s Hollywood movie *The Wizard of Oz*. I suspect it was actually Barnum who had the original idea for such compa-



nies; and that the "Commodore," who was said to be an excellent vocalist, may have resumed his association with his old mentor to appear in them.

At any rate, in February 1881, only a few months before his death, he was billed to appear at his hometown of Manchester's new Opera House with a road company sporting the title "P. T. Barnum's \$30,000 Nutt Combination" (one notes the reluctance to let go of a good thing!), the avowed purpose of which was to feature the "smallest and most versatile comedian in the world" in a new musical comedy expressly written for him entitled *Kranks; or, Fun on a Hand-Car*. As the company's name suggests, Barnum may have had some interest in this entertainment; or perhaps he was simply permitting his little friend to make use of his name. Accounts of the "Commodore" at the time of his death state that he had been on his own for the last half-dozen or so years of his life; but I have little doubt Barnum would have responded favorably to a request for aid, as he often did when other former employees were in need of his support. Toward the end of his life the showman was often a silent, at times even a secret, partner in such enterprises, since his jealous associates in his "Greatest Show on Earth" objected to his involving himself in other ventures.

Toward the end of his own life the "Commodore" was said to have married a woman sometimes described as a "Miss Elston" or "Miss Elstar," but more usually as a Miss Lillian B. Hersey from Oregon, where one of his brothers (James) had settled. She appears to have been close to normal height—the "Commodore" was once observed dancing with her, with his arm not around her waist but around her "bustle"—and there were no surviving children by the marriage. At the time of Nutt's death, Lillian was seen sobbing over his casket, calling him her "dear little boy." According to other sources, she later married a New Hampshire man named Anson B. Cutler, whose relatives came into possession of several items relating to the "Commodore."

"Commodore" Nutt died in New York City on 25 May 1881, his early



Mrs. Tom Thumb with one of her "borrowed" babies. Private Collection.

death brought on by Bright's Disease, and was brought back to Manchester to be buried between his father and mother in the small cemetery, sometimes referred to as Merrill's, on South Willow Street. I first visited the cemetery in the summer of 1997 and was struck by the fact that, whereas his father's monument is a rather pretentious marble obelisk and his mother's headstone is of the usual but nonetheless respectable size, the "Commodore's" own stone is hardly larger than a loaf of bread and contains no information other than "M. Nutt." What accounts for this minuscule size and laconic inscription with its single initial, I wondered? Was the former meant to be a silent commentary on the size of the person resting beneath? Might there even be—in the most respected Yankee tradition—some mordant humor here intended to cheer the graveyard visitor, in this case myself?

Elsewhere I have written about the significance of cemetery monuments as evidence: how dates and other information gleaned from them, not invariably of a written nature, may be accepted as "primary sources," especially when they have been personally commissioned by the individuals they memorialize. If my "reading" of this particular headstone is correct, there are at least two things we may infer from it, despite

the brevity of its inscription and physical dimensions. First, from the single initial employed, I would be willing to wager that the "Commodore" was known to his family and intimates as "Morrison" rather than "George" or "George Washington Nutt," in much the same way P. T. Barnum was never called "Phineas" by his close friends and family members, but rather "Taylor."

My second observation is of a darker, more speculative nature—but one that is nonetheless borne out by the fear and downright terror that has sometimes been expressed by dwarfs and other oddly endowed individuals over what might be the ultimate fate of their remains. Often enough the skeletons and vital organs—in a few cases the entire mummified bodies—of such medical curiosities have found their way into private or public anatomical museums, such as the great Hunterian Museum at the Royal College of Surgeons in London and the Mütter Museum in Philadelphia. This has occurred sometimes with—but more commonly without—the consent of those most concerned; and even physicians have not always been able to resist a little grave-robbing when that was the only way to add a choice specimen to their collections.

Might this explain, at least in part, the paucity of identifying information on the "Commodore's" headstone? Curiously, at the time of his death it was rumored that his New-York physician had designs on his body, when this compassionate individual refused to sign a death certificate—in effect preventing the corpse from being taken home to Manchester for burial—because, or so he claimed, his bill had not been paid! The mercenary doctor was forced to sign the certificate anyway, when it was pointed out to him that, according to law, he would be subject to a hefty fine if he did not do so within a specified period of time. And so the "\$30,000 Nutt" made it back to Manchester after all, to be buried between Major Rodnia Nutt and his first wife Mariah [sic] Dodge. Of course, without doing a little digging, one cannot be absolutely certain his remains are really there. I have heard no rumors to the con-



trary, however, so am willing to believe that they are.

#### NOTES

This article, with slight modification, was a lecture delivered at the Manchester, New Hampshire, Historic Association in the spring of 2000 in connection with an exhibition on "Commodore" Nutt at the same institution. There was no need to document the lecture, which was a rather informal affair to begin with; and the following notes were for the most part prepared in anticipation of questions that might afterwards be posed by members of the audience. The Association and its library possess a fair amount of printed and other materials relating to the "Commodore," and these were freely drawn upon by the author for his paper. Additional sources

were found in institutions such as Bridgeport's Barnum Museum, private collections, and the writer's own publications, including his editions of Barnum's letters and *The Autobiography of Mrs. Tom Thumb*.

1. Letter dated 10 January 1862. Barnum had decided to remain anonymous until the last minute during the negotiations with Nutt, knowing full well that once his name was invoked, the terms would shoot sky-high. Hitchcock himself, who had earlier been involved with the educating of Tom Thumb in academic subjects, probably did the same for the "Commodore."

2. Provided they had given satisfactory service, the Nutts were also to receive all the presents (excepting money) made to them during the contractual period. The business over these "presents" may seem puzzling at first sight, but they were often from famous or influential individuals—military heroes, presidents and heads of state, even monarchs such as Queen Victoria—who had been treated to private or "command" performances; and the gifts, which were generally of an expensive, exquisite nature, would themselves be placed on exhibit to further publicize the "Commodore." Barnum obviously felt entitled to their use so long as the Nutts were under his management—and why shouldn't he, since the display of such items helped



The monuments of the Nutt family in Manchester's Merrill Cemetery. The one to the left commemorates the "Commodore's" father Rodnia. The headstone to the right is that of the "Commodore's" mother Mariah, who died in 1859. The tiny stone between them marks the final resting place of "M. Nutt."

swell the coffers of all concerned? The same practice had prevailed during his earlier tours with Tom Thumb.

3. *Manchester of Yesterday: A Human Interest Story of Its Past* (Manchester, N.H.: Granite State Press, 1939), pp. 158, 160.

4. A small "herald" or handbill privately owned but exhibited at the Manchester Historic Association in conjunction with the "Commodore" Nutt exhibition additionally reveals that, under Lillie's management, Nutt was then being billed as "General" George Washington Morrison Nutt, which confirms Barnum's statement in the 1869 edition of his autobiography that it was he who conferred on him the title of "Commodore." This little bill—undated but probably from around 1860—goes on to describe Nutt as then being 17 years old, 29 inches tall, and weighing 25 pounds; and his brother Rodnia as being 20 years old, 45 inches tall, and weighing 65 pounds. The figures are not neces-

sarily accurate, obviously (George would have been around 12 years old in 1860), but do indicate Barnum was not the first to exaggerate in this area. The troupe to which the brothers belonged was then performing at Rochester's Corinthian Hall, and included a female dwarf named Miss S. Belton, billed as the "Fairy Queen." Manager Lillie's initials are given in the bill as "J. H."

5. Lavinia, also, who was born on 31 October (Halloween) 1841, was said to have cost the showman untold sums of money. She had "refused his offer of One Thousand Dollars per Week," the advertisements for Barnum's American Museum proclaimed at the time of her debut there, forcing the showman to make her "such advantageous offers" that she had finally consented to appear at the Museum for a few weeks only. I have had the opportunity to study her contract as well, and need hardly add that such claims were no less fantastic in her case than they were in the "Commodore's."

6. José Dugardein Collection, Belgium.

7. The walnut-shaped carriage does not appear to have ever actually belonged to the "Commodore"; and in later years, after his death, it continued to be taken on the road by Tom Thumb and his wife, and then by Lavinia and her second husband, Count Primo Magri, who was often mistaken for his predecessor. Eventually it was exhibited as part of a small collection of Tom Thumb memorabilia at Cliff House in San Francisco; and today it may be seen at the Barnum Museum in Bridgeport. This same carriage, incidentally, is sometimes said to have been a gift to the "Commodore" from Queen Victoria, as was also, supposedly, the ultramarine blue carriage made for Tom Thumb during his first visit to England. In fact, both carriages were ordered and paid for by Barnum.

8. Minnie married another small person named "Major" Edward Newell—a professional roller skater who was sometimes billed as the "skatorial phenomenon"—and died in childbirth in 1878. Her elder sister Lavinia lived until 1919.





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## An Early Ringling Equestrain

By John Daniel Draper

Daniel (Dennie ) K. Curtis was born in Great Bend, Kansas on November 29, 1885. The earliest record of his circus career was an entry in the Ringling Bros. Circus employee ledger book for 1907 where he was listed as a jockey.

Two years later on Ringling Bros. Circus he appeared in two events in the hippodrome races. He was one of the five entries in the men's flat races. In the All Nations race he represented the Indian while Flo Harris (later Flo Mardo) was the cowgirl, Dave Clark, the cowboy and Frank Potter, the Russian.

That year there was a Taximeter Act on the show that featured a victoria, a horse and two men. The efforts of the driver to coax the horse to draw the vehicle took up the early portion of the act. The animal refused to work and finally became so unruly that he pulled the man riding in the carriage out on to the ground and then jumped into the carriage himself. The victoria was finally drawn out of the ring by the driver and the horse walked behind. Although not associated with this act in 1909, Dennie and his wife Edna in 1925 had a taximeter mule act very similar in nature to this one. It was quite likely that Curtis got the idea for such an act by witnessing this one in his early career.

The Baraboo, Wisconsin *Sauk Co. Democrat* for March 31, 1910 reported: "Daniel K. Curtis and Miss Edna Hoffman (a native of Lake Geneva, Wisconsin) were married Tuesday evening at the home of the bride's mother, Mrs. Ernest Schleicher, on Water Street. The couple was attended by Mr. and Mrs. David Clark and the ceremony was performed by Justice Halstead. The bride is a graduate of Baraboo High School and her friends join in wishing her and her chosen one a bright future. The groom is an employee of Ringling Bros. and will travel with the Adam Forepaugh

& Sells Bros. Circus in 1910. The couple will make their home in Baraboo."

In 1910 Curtis was a horse trainer and, representing an American Indian, rode Little Sun in the All Nations race on the hippodrome track. In display #5 he presented Orlando, the Fire King, in "an equine feature of greatest merit." This animal was "one of the finest individual liberty horses ever exhibited." Coming later in display #7 was an original arenic feature, "beautiful specimens of the perfect horse gaily


Forepaugh-Sells 1910 ad listing the Curtis 61 horse act. Pfening Archives.

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BULLS AND  
HORSES  
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caparisoned with costly trappings, obedient to their trainer's call, moving in harmony in the most complicated, intricate and difficult maneuvers." This act actually involved posturing and evaluations by a large number of horses which circled in different directions with a galloping cordon of ponies encircling them on the ring curb. This "so called" 61 horse act was a bewildering spectacle. In a 1949 letter his wife Edna wrote: "This is the last big act of this type ever broken and seen in this country.

"Dennie broke this act in the old Ringling ring barn the winter of 1909 and 1910 and he was the feature of the Adam Forepaugh Sells Bros. Circus with it in the season of 1910. The riding horse that he used was the famous 'Silver King' horse that was the pride of the Brothers in those years. The special groom for 'Silver King' was the groom they called Silver King Billy and he was a charter member of the Baraboo Elks.

"The act was called the 61 horse act but there were in all, including the ponies that run the outside curb, 48 animals.

"It was a gorgeous animal presentation and Dennie was only 24 years old at that time.

"The first 61 horse act broken in this country was by John O'Brien and Dennie broke their second [big] act."

Two displays later there was a big haute école act in all rings and on the hippodrome track. Curtis, one of three riders on the track, was on the mount General Grant.

The Curtises continued on Adam Forepaugh & Sells Bros. in 1911, the last season that circus was on the road. Edna was one of five cowgirl race riders and Dan again presented Orlando. Dan and Edna were also in a striking manege novelty with their clever high school horses.



The next eight seasons found Curtis and his wife on Ringling Bros. and finally in 1919 on Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey. It was during this period that they participated in a wide variety of acts and became well acquainted with the John Agee and his wife. Curtis was ring master, performed trick horses, drove a four horse Roman chariot in the hippodrome races and rode manege. Edna also rode manege, went into the flat races, sometimes as a cowgirl, and danced in the ballet. Also, both were horse trainers, rode in the street parade, went into the spectacle and grand entry and held objects, etc. From 1913 until 1916 their salary increased from \$35 to \$45 per week. Their address on their contract at that time was 133 Water Street in Baraboo, Wisconsin.

Other specialties for Edna were the comedy horse act in 1912 and the mixed group of happy animals—colliers, Shetland ponies, etc.—that “fox trotted” and skated from 1917 to 1919. Also in 1919 Edna rode Dolly Varden, John Ringling’s personal horse, which he had purchased from Rhoda Royal.

Some of Curtis’ specific acts were the liberty horses and the thoroughbred high gated cream horse Gold Dust that performed on the track the famous two step, the high Spanish trot and the popular American cake walk in 1912, a hind leg walking horse in 1915, the Shetland ponies, dogs and monkeys in 1917, the colliers and Shetlands in 1918, and the colliers and bears in 1919. Both Edna and Dennie showed equines in statuary poses in 1915.

In the 1920’s Dan and Edna began promoting Shrine circuses in the Midwest. They combined their talents in staging the Minneapolis Zuhrah Shrine Circus in 1926 and continued until Dennie died in 1938. After that Edna produced the Zuhrah Temple Shrine Circus until her



The Curtis act playing fairs in 1922. Pfening Archives.

retirement in 1961. The Curtises also staged Shrine shows in Dayton and Cincinnati in 1927, Louisville in 1928, Los Angeles and St. Paul in 1929, Cincinnati, St. Paul, Duluth and Louisville in 1930, St. Paul and Los Angeles in 1931, St. Paul in 1932, St. Paul and Cleveland in 1933, Evansville, Denver, Birmingham and Winnipeg in 1934, St. Paul, Syracuse, Aberdeen and Deadwood, South Dakota under canvas in 1935 and St. Paul in 1937.

This interest in and know-how for producing Shrine shows probably came to Curtis from John Agee whose All Star Circus had played many of these dates in the early 1920’s. In fact, in 1921 Edna’s eight trained canines had appeared on the Agee Shrine circuit at Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Omaha and Sioux City and in 1922 Dennie was the program director for Agee’s All Star Shrine dates at Minneapolis, Omaha and Milwaukee.

The Dennie and Edna Curtis rube act in 1932. Pfening Archives.



Also, in the 1920’s the Curtises perfected a very laughable taximeter mule act. The balky mule would refuse to pull a wagon with a man in it. In two versions of the act, the mule eventually either kicked the wagon to pieces or ended up climbing into the wagon and having the man pull the wagon out of the ring with the mule riding in the wagon.

These episodes were excruciatingly funny and were evidence of skill and patience in animal education. They were valuable object lessons of what could be done in developing the quadruped sense of humor through kindness. The beast seemed to be able to do everything except speak the comedy lines. The mule from time to time went by different names such as Beeswax, TNT or Zuhrah.

The earliest references to Curtis’ taximeter act were found in January 1925 at the English Society Circus in Mitchell, South Dakota and in 1926 at the Minneapolis Shrine Circus. This stunt was performed at virtually every Shrine circus which Curtis produced down to the Omaha Shine Circus when he died in 1938. Other shows where his taximeter act appeared were: National Horse Show at Madison Square Garden (1930); Royal Winter Fair in Toronto, Ontario (1930); Carl Romig’s Indoor Circus at Pythian Theater in Columbus, Ohio (1931); Barnes & Carruthers’ Great European Olympia Circus at Chicago Stadium (1931); grandstand attractions at fairs (1931); Old Time Yankee Circus at Chicago Stadium (1931); Lagoon Theater at Chicago Century of Progress (20 weeks) (1934); Frank Wirth Circus (1935); Barnes & Carruthers’ Great European Olympia Circus at Michigan State Fair (1935); Dennie Curtis Fashion Plate Circus at Detroit (1935); Cole Bros. Circus at Chicago Stadium (1936, 1937).

In the period from



1920 through 1938 Curtis was involved with circus plans for a number of shows in addition to the Shrine dates which he produced. In January of 1922 it was announced that a new circus to travel by wagon was being organized and outfitted by W. R. Tothill of Chicago. This new organization would take to the country roads with the opening of the coming season. Curtis, the veteran horse trainer, would be associated in the ownership of the wagon show along with another well-known circus man whose identity was being withheld. At that time no details of the show's size or policies were revealed other than it would be a regular circus. No further references to this show were found.

Two years later in the middle of November, Curtis had just closed a fine season with parks and fairs and was in quarters at Baraboo getting ready for the vaudeville circuit and indoor promotions for the next season. He planned to again be with the World Amusement Service Association.

On May 23, 1927 McIntyre's Fraternal Circus opened its season at New Philadelphia, Ohio under the auspices of the KKK. Among the some fourteen different acts on that show were the Riding Rooneys and Dan Curtis with his dogs and ponies.

For the spring of 1928 Dennie Curtis & Co. appeared on Harry LaPearl's Police and Fireman's Circus in Indianapolis. Later during the regular season Curtis presented his animal acts on the revolving table in the Hagenbeck-Wallace program.

Miller Bros. 101 Ranch Wild West opened the Chicago Stadium in 1929. Among others on the program were Joe Hodgini, George Hanneford, Sr., Victor and Madame Bedini, the Rooneys and Dennie Curtis with his mule and dogs. Edna Curtis presented her comedy dog and pony circus. Albert Hodgini was equestrian director and Curtis was assistant equestrian director.



The ticket semi-trailer of the Curtis-Gregg Circus in 1934. Pfening Archives.

Following this Chicago date, Curtis played the Portland, Oregon Rose Festival and the Cleveland, Ohio horse show. By the end of September a training barn was nearing completion at Westmont, Illinois some 20 miles from Chicago. The Curtisdale Training Stables & Kennels, with a 40 foot ring, fifteen horse stalls, electric lights, water and heat were to become the home for many riding acts. There were three domestic animal rooms and an exercise corral in the rear.

By April of 1930 the Curtises had returned to the Westmont training quarters after a successful indoor Shrine season. They immediately made a number of improvements and began practicing with new animals. They played fair dates at York, Pennsylvania and Raleigh and Wilson, North Carolina and then the National Horse Show in Madison Square Garden and the Royal Winter Fair in Toronto. Because of a very busy schedule, Curtis was forced to cancel a five week engagement with Bertram Mills in London.

At the indoor circus at the Pythian Theater in Columbus, Ohio in January 1931, Curtis was assistant manager. From April 7 to 20, 1931, he presented his funny mule act on the Greater European Olympia Circus at the Chicago Stadium and served as co-equestrian director with Jorgen Christiansen. Together they kept everything moving at a rapid pace. Curtis handled the whistle through the greater part of the show.

Christiansen presented his eight liberty stallions and Edna showed her animal athletes, dogs & ponies.

In December of 1932 Curtis and his wife appeared again at the Chicago Stadium, this time with the Old Time Yankee Circus.

After the eastern fall fair dates in 1933, Curtis and F. O. Gregg began planning a full fledged circus for 1934.

By March it was being organized at Westmont, Illinois. They had finally decided on the title—Curtis-Gregg Fashion Plate Circus in preference to Curtis-Gregg Four Brothers' Circus.

For 25 years F. O. Gregg had been a pioneer in producing thrill acts in the amusement world. His current sensation was the shooting of a man from a cannon. Curtis and Gregg immediately began buying semi-trailers for their circus—fifteen in all—specially built with no two bodies alike. They expected to have one of the flashiest outfits on the road. The circus appeared under a big top consisting of an 80 foot round top with four 35 foot middles. The side show was a 60 foot round with two 30 foot middles and the cookhouse was 30 by 60 feet.

The nucleus of the performance was the beautiful and specially trained black horse troupe developed by Curtis during the previous two seasons and Gregg's man shot from the cannon act. The six jet black Arabian stallions were spirited and fine performers. With a long whip, in dress suit with tall silk hat, Curtis directed these horses in waltzing, drills and the ring curb parade. In all, he furnished some 30 head of stock for the performance. The performance also featured Harriet Hodgini's principal riding act as well as the Albert Hodgini Family in both comedy and straight riding. Edna presented her dogs and ponies with the dogs both leaping and somersaulting. Curtis and Leo Hamilton rode manege. Dennie and Edna had their taximeter mule and Leo Hamilton was the ringmaster.



After five weeks on the road, the Curtis-Gregg Fashion Plate Circus closed on Sunday, June 9th at West Allis, Wisconsin. The company had experienced poor business from the start. At West Allis all the trucks were repossessed and Gregg left the show. It folded when a deal could not be arranged through Ed F. Car-ruthers for it to continue. Loyal performers and employees

remained until all the equipment was in the barns at Westmont, Illinois. At that time Curtis had futile hopes of shortly reorganizing the show.

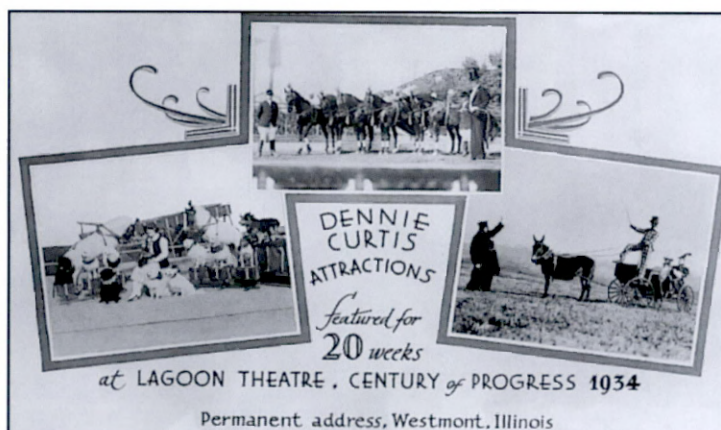
Later in the summer, Curtis had his black horse troupe and Edna's dogs, along with the comedy mule act, at the Lagoon Theater at Chicago's Century of Progress Exposition for a 20 week run. It was one of the most talked of features at the fair.

According to Edna's description of Curtis' beautiful precision horse act at the Century of Progress, there was a special solo number featuring two Ta-Ra-Ra-Boom-De-A horses, done to the accompaniment of special music. Much fan mail was received at the fair and the Curtises were proud of the fact that Spanish Royalty came twice to see their act.

Another specialty was the horse Duke, which dashed in and around the ring and then went up on his hind leg walk which would have gone on forever if they allowed him to do so. The finale number was a knock-out. The horse Gene was stripped quickly of his trappings, a sunbonnet was tied on his head and he dashed around the ring and jumped through a large paper hoop in which was fixed a long flowing gown. Coming out of the hoop he reared immediately and walked around the entire ring on his hind legs.

Very early color camera pictures by Eastman Co. were taken of this act at the fair. These gorgeous pictures were shown daily in the Hall of Science. Curtis unsuccessfully tried to buy copies.

By the end of 1934 work was pro-



The Curtis acts at the 1934 Century of Progress. Pfening Archives.

gressing on a new home on the property in Westmont, Illinois. It was completed the following March and a regular house warming was held.

Meanwhile, Curtis took to the road in 1935 with his now famous black horse troupe and with his Riding School with which he showed how circus riders were made. In August his attractions returned from the Dakotas where they had been playing under canvas for auspices.

They spent a week at The Last Days of Pompeii Show in the Cleveland Stadium. After the Barnes-Carruthers Great European Olympic Circus at the Michigan State Fair, Dennie and Edna played a nineteen day rodeo engagement at Madison Square Garden before joining Frank Wirth's Circus for Shrine dates from Minnesota to New York to Alabama. He closed out the season with a long jump from Birmingham to the Winnipeg Shrine Circus.

Curtis was on Cole Bros. Circus in 1936 for the Chicago Stadium date and in 1937 for both the Chicago Stadium and the New York Hippodrome dates. In all of these he did the taximeter act as well as a Shetland pony drill.

He was scheduled again in 1938 for the Cole Bros. Circus date at the Chicago Stadium. Just prior to that event, however, he died on April 13th at Omaha, Nebraska following a few days' illness with pneumonia. At the time of his last illness he was equestrian director for the Shrine Circus in Omaha. He was buried with Shrine services at Lake Geneva, Wisconsin. Besides his wife, he was

survived by his father and two brothers.

After her husband's death, Edna carried on. From her home in Westmont, Illinois in 1938 and 1939 she advertised as the owner of the Black Horse Troupe of Performing Horses Supreme of the Curtis-dale Animal College. Two acts were described.

Number One: "Black Swan, Betty Coed, General Grant, Duke of Windsor, Gene and Rex--six beautiful horses performing at liberty a routine of fantastic drills and formations, featuring both the dancing Ta-Ra-Ra-Boom-De-A Horses and the National Military Hind Leg Walking Horse."

Number Two: "High School and manege horses, most versatile horses before the public, doing dances of tomorrow--the Jitterbug, the Fire Dance, the Carioca, Three O'Clock in the Morning besides many others, featuring the Driving Horse General Grant, a magnificent show in himself."

She presented dogs and ponies at the Greater European Olympia Circus at the Chicago Stadium in 1939. That same year at the Minneapolis Shrine she showed the famous Black Horse Troupe assisted by Capt. Norris E. Wynn. She also rode a beautiful high school act, noted for its timing and rhythm.

Edna sold the Black Horse Troupe to Polack Bros. Circus in 1940. The next year Carlos Carreon presented them on the Minneapolis Shrine Show and Edna exhibited skilled horsemanship in driving General Grant. In addition, she was the equestrian director. Through the following years she served variously as equestrian director, personnel director, producer or booking agent for the Minneapolis Shrine Show until her retirement in 1961.

On January 6, 1957 at Fulton, Indiana, Edna married the noted horse trainer, Jorgen Christiansen (1885-1969), a colleague of her late husband. In the same year she was also elected to the Circus Hall of Fame. She died in 1977.





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# Frank A. Robbins a most successful failure

## PART FOUR

By Robert Sabia

"Strictly Confidential—This Show will be newly equipped and greatly augmented during the winter, and will be second to none on the road for the Season of 1888."

So said George S. Cole in his concluding remarks in the 1887 route book. It is believed that Cole was speaking the truth as he knew it in the fall of 1887. Optimism was in the air and the pending winter circus reinforced the notion that money would be plentiful in the spring when outfitting the road show. As we now know, there was a paucity of money at this time and this fact could only negatively influence how the plans were actually implemented.

In the October 29, 1887 *Clipper*, Frank A. Robbins advertised that a light band chariot, three light 2-horse cages having tableaux bodies and an African lioness were for sale at a lot price of \$1,000. It is possible that these wagons were originally on his overland circus. The *Clipper* of December 10th announced that Robert Hunting was expanding his show and bought a "handsome" bandwagon from Robbins, presumably the one above, and stated that he was interested in purchasing some gilded cages as well.

Naturally during the winter circus, the focus was on its doings with little mention about the preparation for the road show. However, shortly after the winter show closed there was a refocusing with news coming forth regarding the on-rushing season. In the *Clipper* of February 11th was a press release relating that the show would be larger than ever in 1888. It also revealed that Robbins himself was quite ill at Frenchtown, New Jersey, probably justifiably suffering from acute heartbreak. He must have recovered shortly thereafter

because the March 10th issue had him just returning from St. Louis. While there, he purchased a troupe of broncho horses for his newly added wild west for the forthcoming season. He alleged that he added a number of new wagons and chariots, and his entire show would go out newly deco-

rated. He was marching in step with the times with the wild west component. Adam Forepaugh had been highlighting his western features for a couple of years and the successes of Buffalo Bill were well known to his competition. The typical Robbins press release followed in the next issue of the *Clipper*, providing somewhat exaggerated information regarding the size of the show. He claimed that "[I]t will carry fifty cages, three hundred horses and five hundred people and will travel on its own train of sixteen flat cars, five box cars and five sleeping cars. The advance brigade will be under the charge of O. J. Boyd, who will have fifty assistants. . . . Mr. Robbins will have a family of clay eaters from the Florida everglades."

Frank A. Robbins Circus newspaper ad used in 1888. Author's collection.

AS BRIGHT AS OLD SOL'S LUSTROUS GLARE.  
A SHOW OF PRICELESS WORTH.

A VERITABLE GREAT WORLD'S FAIR.  
THE GRANDEST SHOW ON EARTH.

**FRANK A. ROBBINS'**  
Gigantic and Sensationally Realistic  
**WILD WEST!**  
HIPPODROME, CARAVAN,  
CIRCUS, MENAGERIE, MUSEUM, AVIARY AND AQUARIUM



A COLOSSAL CONFEDERATION OF FAMOUS FEATURES FROM THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE, NEW YORK CITY.  
WILL RESIDE AT  
**WAVERLY,**  
**THURSDAY, JULY 19, 1888.**  
ADMISSION 50 CENTS.  
**150 MOUNTED PARTICIPANTS 150**  
In Starting and Thrilling Feats.  
**10 WESTERN HORSEWOMEN! 10**  
Wonderfully Expert in Marksmanship with Fire-Arms and in the Saddle.  
**Genuine Cowboys! Genuine Indians!**  
SQUAWS, MAIDENS AND PAPPOOSIES.  
KENTIAN TAQUEROS, CHALLENGES, TRAPPEES, BUTTERS, SCOUTS AND RANGERS.  
A mile realizations of actual occurrences on the Western Frontier. War Drama. Surprising exhibitions of skill with the Lariat.  
**WILD MUSTANGS! BUCKING BRONCHOS!**  
Caught with the Lasso. The marvelous performance of  
**THE VIRGINIA REEL ON HORSEBACK!**  
By the entire Company.  
**CLASSIC ROMAN HIPPODROME SPORTS**  
GLADIATORIAL FEATS AND CHARIOT RACES.  
**100 CIRCUS CELEBRITIES! 100**  
Headed by the Champion Broncho Rider of the World.  
**CHARLES W. FISH,**  
ROVER EQUUSMAN.  
FAMOUS SQUADRON.  
MARVELOUS GYMNASTS.  
EXPERT BICYCLISTS.  
COMICAL CLOWNS.  
AMAZING ACROBATS.  
DARING TRAPPEES.  
**SATSUMA'S ROYAL JAPANESE TROUPE**  
**50 LADY ARTISTS 50**  
Making the grandest confederation in existence.  
PERFORMING STALLIONS, PONIES, DOGS, PIGS, MONKEYS, AND GOATS.  
A Herd of 20 Elephants, including the marvelous  
**\$125,000 Band of Elephant Musicians**  
Actually Playing Popular Airs with Human-like Skill, and the Wonderfully trained  
**QUADRILE ELEPHANTS!**  
Forming the men and tripping "the light fantastic toe," with the grace of an ordinary ballroom miler.  
ANIMALS FROM ALL REGIONS OF EXTREME RARITY AND VALUE!

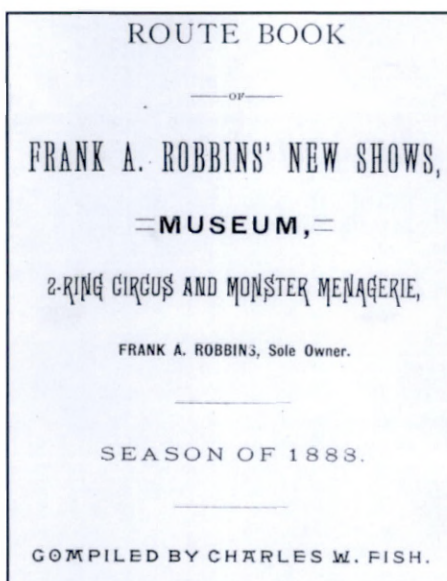
On March 24th, Robbins introduced his new title as Frank A. Robbins' Wild West, Hippodrome, Museum, Menagerie and Three Ring Circus. He was seeking performers, including leapers, tumblers, riders, aerial acts, clowns, curiosities, novelties, hippodrome people, cowboys and Indians. He was selling a box sleeper, a 45 ft. flat car, a 60 ft. flat car, a baggage wagon, a tableau wagon, a light ticket wagon, four light cage wagons and other paraphernalia. He was still seeking a lady aerialist and cowboys when he placed his "Call" for the opening on April 21st in Frenchtown.

Robbins' trips to St. Louis and an earlier one by Charles Shield, train master, may have been a precursor of a significant change in routing the show. Apparently in response to an inquiry from Robbins, James A.



Bailey advised by letter on April 12th: "We intend to exhibit at Cleveland, Bryan, Owosso, Muskegon, Grand Rapids, Big Rapids, St. Ignace, not at present decided on. I have positive information that Sells has contracted for all the Lake Superior country, crossing Mackinaw (sic) Straits taking all the Lake Superior country from St. Ignace to Duluth, then Northern Pacific west to California all during the month of June. . . . I will sell the Trakene Stallion 'Faust' for One hundred and fifty Dollars, he is finely broken for tricks or menage, do you want him?" Barnum & Bailey did in fact play most of these towns in June and then later returned through Wisconsin to play a half dozen dates on Michigan's Upper Peninsular later in the season.

In the roster for 1888, Robbins assembled his typically impressive array of circus executives. He was described as the sole owner which indicates that he was not operating as a corporation. He was personally liable for all of the debts of the operation and did not have the protection of a corporate shield. Second in command was again William P. Loper, designated as the general manager. Interestingly, George Cole did not return. He had taken a position with the much smaller Walter L. Main Circus, a wagon show. However, E. D. Colvin was back as the manager of privileges and it appears from time to time somewhat more. Other staff included Clarence Allen, treasurer (repeater); William Carroll (repeater) and Bert Richardson, equestrian directors; John Pifer, press agent; William Stewart, boss canvas man, with James Whalen (repeater) as his first assistant; Charles Shields (repeater), train master; Pat Reilley, property boss; John Cullen, master of lighting; Andrew Gaffney (repeater), parade director; William Milligan (repeater), concert manager; William Thompson (repeater), elephant trainer; brother Orsa Robbins (repeater), mail messenger; and Harry Leoni (repeater). Assisting Boyd in the advance was Gus Bernard (repeater), general press agent and advance car #1 manager; H. J. Ellis (repeater); contracting agent; and F. W. Hodges,



The cover of the 1888 Frank A. Robbins Circus route book. Pfening Archives.

advance car #2 manager. Henry Sylvester was back in his old position as manager of the stereopticon brigade.

On the performing side, Dr. S. J. Hickey and Daniel McClure were ringmasters. They were complemented by repeaters Charles Fish, rider; Charles Watson, hurdle rider; William and Lucy DaVene, aerialists; Andrew Gaffney, cannon balls; William Harbeck, contortionist; Rosina Dubsky, equestrienne; William Thompson, elephant performances; William Carroll, Charles Pettit and Tom Watson, clowns. New were Mlle. Loto, balancing trapeze; Kate Harbeck, slack wire juggler; Tony Lowande, four and six horse rider; Satsuma, Japanese juggler, globe and table dancer; and Bert Richardson, clown. There were nine cowboys, five cowgirls and twelve Indians.

There were six bands: The American Institute Band, James Burns (repeater) with thirteen members; the Italian band, Louis Nicastro with seven members; the cowboy band, Nebraska Joe with seven members; the black jubilee band, Josua McHatt, with eight members; the continental band, Charles Pettit with three members including brother Charles Robbins tooting the flute; and the concert band with six pieces. Some individuals played in more than one band.

The concert consisted of William Milligan doing his Dutch and Irish comedy routines; William Carroll, Negro comedy and comic singer; Charles Pettit, eccentric Negro and music; James White, interlocutor and song and dance; all repeaters. New was Bert Richardson who performed the essence of old Virginny. Probably not surprising anyone on the show, Mattie Bliss was back as the concert vocalist. Miss Lotto closed the concert with a "Dive for Life" from the top of the canvas.

In Colvin's side show, he had Dr. S. J. Hickey and Daniel McClure as orators. Inside he had an excellent array of talent on display including Madame Zingara, snake charmer (repeater); Madame Turpin, long haired queen (repeater); Mlle. Zezal, Circassian beauty; General Rheinbeck, midget; Professor Bouncy, musical albino; Keewee, Maori chief; Professor Bromo, Punch and Judy; Professor Giovani, performing birds; Professor D'Alvati, magician; Zip, What is it? (repeater); John Jennings, strong man; Mad Blanche, fortune teller; and Joe Graff, fat boy. In an unusual move, the Italian band supported the side show.

In a March 31, 1888 letter in the Pfening Archives, George Bunnell of dime museum fame offered Robbins Zip for \$25 a week, paid monthly. The show was to provide Zip with care, board, washing, medicine and anything needed to replace exhibition clothing. Bunnell would provide one good suit and two sets of exhibition clothing. Robbins was also to appoint a person on the show to handle Zip so no one could "meddle or fool" with him. The fact that Zip was with the show that year indicates that this offer or something similar was accepted.

The route book is wonderfully complete in providing a detailed description of the size of the show. Tents were identified as the big top (120 ft. round top with two 50 ft. middles); the menagerie (60 ft. round with five 30 ft. middles); side show (60 ft. round with one 30 ft. middle); dressing room (60 ft. round); three stable tents (72ft. x 30 ft.); three dining tents (50 ft. x 20 ft., 40 ft. x 20 ft., 30 ft. x 20 ft.); cook tent (30 ft. x 20 ft.); blacksmith tent (20 ft. x 20 ft.); har-



ness-maker tent (20 ft. x 20 ft.); and barber's tent (20 ft. x 20 ft.)

The train consisted of eleven 60 foot flats, five 60 foot stocks, one elephant car, two box sleepers, and four drawing room sleepers. The wagon count included one ticket-office wagon, three bandwagons, four tableaux, two Roman chariots, one steam calliope and twenty-three baggage wagons. No specific mention was made of the cages nor of the advance cars. However, it is reasonable to presume that there were two advance cars.

The animal count included eight performing elephants, one clown elephant, 90 horses (both performing and baggage), thirteen bronchos, fourteen ponies, six donkeys, one den with three performing lions, a Bengal tiger, a jaguar, a leopard, a California silver lion, two Indian water buffaloes, two yaks, a nyghau (Indian antelope), a spotted deer, an eland, a sacred Hindoo cow, an ibex, two hyenas, a Japanese wart hog, a zebra, two camels, a llama, an American eagle, an ant-eater, a porcupine, two cages of monkeys, a cage with rose and lemon-crested cockatoos, two macaws, a tiger cat, two black bears, and a happy family cage. All in all, it was an excellent array of animals to impress the locals.

In anticipation of the coming tour, nine elephants arrived in Frenchtown on April 14th and with them the final stages of preparation for the opening on Saturday, April 21st. The canvas was up a few days ahead and daily rehearsals were held. Once again there was a cold opening day to fairly good houses. The local paper reflected with sadness that good friends were leaving for the summer. The newspaper ads now reflected the fact that the show recently returned from a successful stay at the American Institute in New York City. The ads also featured the "Wild West" and the "Clay Eaters." Lambertville, fifteen miles to the south was visited on Monday in rainy weather. Light houses shivered throughout the program in the after-

noon and evening. Taking a departure from former routes, the company crossed the Delaware River and

Bailey would be in larger towns and cities, the broad advertising campaign practiced by the Greatest Show on Earth probably would affect Robbins' business in the smaller towns. Nevertheless, it was Michigan or bust for the troupe.

Playing south-central Pennsylvania initially, there were a series of relatively short jumps and business that ranged from disappointing to very good. The two largest cities scheduled resulted in the smaller draws. At York on April 30, three electric lights were used in the big top for the first time. The lighting was considered dull (what does one want from three bulbs) but it was a start. Business at York suffered because most of the area's farmers were busy in the fields planting crops. The next day at the state capital of Harrisburg there was another mediocre crowd. At the small village of Mifflintown on May 2, the elephant Charlie attacked his keeper George Heath, knocking him down three times before plunging his tusk just below Heath's knee in a most serious manner. He

was immediately hospitalized and remained in Mifflintown until he recovered. Apparently pleased with the success of this assault, Charlie attempted another altercation with his new keeper the next day at Lewistown, but after knocking him down, Charlie's attention was diverted and no serious harm resulted from the incident. On May 4th at Tyrone, heavy rain discouraged potential ticket buyers and it was a poor day all around--both in business and logistics.

Over the next few days, business was fair to middling, culminating in a deluge at Hollidaysburg on the 9th that destroyed any semblance of serious business. To make matters worse, the lot was a mess, necessitating hauling empty wagons off the lot with great effort and then loading them. A late arrival was in store the next day at the large city of Johnstown. Rain again visited the show and business was only fair.

FRANK A. ROBBINS'

## Wild West, Hippodrome, Caravan, Circus,

\*MUSEUM, AQUARIUM, AND AVIARY.\*

---

EXECUTIVE STAFF.

FRANK A. ROBBINS, *Sole Owner and Director.*

|                                 |                                   |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| WILLIAM P. LOPER                | General Manager                   |
| E. D. COLVIN                    | Manager of Privileges             |
| CLARENCE E. ALLEN               | Treasurer                         |
| WM. CARROLL and BERT RICHARDSON | Equestrian Managers               |
| JOHN PIPER                      | Press Agent                       |
| JAMES J. BURNS                  | Leader American Institute Band    |
| LOUIS NICASTRO                  | Leader Italian Band               |
| CHARLES PETIT                   | Leader Continental Band           |
| NEBRASKA JOE                    | Leader Cow Boy Band               |
| JOE MCNATT                      | Leader Colored Jubilee Band       |
| WILLIAM STEWART                 | Master of Canvas                  |
| WILLIAM S. RANDOLPH             | Stud Groom and Veterinary Surgeon |
| CHARLES SHIELDS                 | Master of Transportation          |
| PAT REILLEY                     | Master of "Properties"            |
| JOHN CULLEN                     | Master of Illuminating Department |
| SIG. HARRY LEONI                | Chef de Cuisine                   |
| EDDIE WEST                      | Superintendent Dining Tents       |
| DAN'L FITZGERALD                | Forage Master                     |
| ANDREW GAFFNEY                  | Leader of Parade                  |
| WILLIAM MILLIGAN                | Manager Concert                   |
| WILLIAM M. THOMPSON             | Elephant Trainer                  |
| JOHN KENT                       | Train Watchman                    |
| JOHN W. MURRAY                  | Superintendent of Sleeping Cars   |
| ORSA J. ROBBINS                 | Mail Messenger                    |
| EDDIE WHITE                     | Superintendent Candy Stands       |
| WM. SMITH                       | Special Detective                 |
| JOHN KEENAN                     | Calliope Player                   |
| DR. S. J. HICKEY                | Chief Orators and Announcers      |
| DANIEL MCCLURE                  | of Ring Features.                 |

A page from the 1888 Robbins route book. Pfening Archives.

played Bristol, Rhode Island on April 24th. Attendance and the weather were both better. Already the slick boys were at it. The *Bucks County Intellegencia* reported that a local was taken in back of a tent to purchase tea at \$20 per pound. Unfortunately the tea had already been sold but the local was induced to play 3 card monte. Amazingly, he lost (where do these locals get all of this ready cash?) and probably was no smarter for the experience.

The routing plan that was evolving was to play a number of stands in Pennsylvania, ever in a westerly direction with the ultimate objective of reaching Michigan. Why Michigan? Robbins was well aware that Barnum & Bailey and Sells Bros. would be in that state during the same general time frame as he was planning. Although Barnum &



Arriving in the general vicinity of Pittsburgh, business improved somewhat. At the small village of Derry, business pleasantly surprised the troupe with good houses. At Irwin on May 14th and Connellsville on the 19th, the troupe followed Wallace & Co. by a few days. However, very good houses were experienced in both locales. The situation was reversed at Brownsville on the 16th where Robbins preceded Wallace by a day. Interestingly, only fair business resulted. Rain beat the ticket buying public back somewhat at Uniontown on the 18th, but it was still a fairly good day. The next week was reasonably good at the box office, starting at Mount Pleasant on the 21st, and ending at Newburg, Ohio on the 26th. At the only other stand in Ohio, very heavy rain broke an extended drought at Oak Harbor on the 28th. Although the afternoon house was OK, the night show was lost. There was another late arrival the next day at Tecumseh, Michigan, causing the afternoon show to be poorly attended. It was better at night but still not good. The remaining part of the week manifested bad takes as the show gradually worked its way through the south central part of the state. Weather was a combination of cold and rain which did little to promote attendance at the circus. Typical of the week was Cedar Springs on June 2, where it was cold both in temperature and reception.

It became circus weather the next week and accordingly, business greatly improved. Starting at Greenville on June 4, with an excellent day, the show traveled east for two days and then headed northwest, reaching Cadillac on the 8th. How cold does it get in Michigan? Well at Cadillac some attaches found snow between the car tracks and, quite appropriately, quickly engaged in an intense snowball fight. Who sez cir- cusing isn't fun? A short rainstorm

| CIRCUS PERFORMERS.                                                       |                                            |                        |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| LADIES.                                                                  |                                            |                        |
| MISS LUCY DAVENE . . . . .                                               | Aëriel Acts                                |                        |
| MDLLE. ROSINA DUBSKY . . . . .                                           | Corde Elastique and Equestrienne           |                        |
| MDLLE. LOTO . . . . .                                                    | Balancing Trapeze                          |                        |
| MADM. W. CARROLL . . . . .                                               | Leader Entree Ring No. 2                   |                        |
| MADM. MARY WATSON . . . . .                                              | Leader Entree Ring No. 1                   |                        |
| MISS KATE HARBECK . . . . .                                              | Slack Wire Juggler                         |                        |
| GENTLEMEN.                                                               |                                            |                        |
| CHARLES W. FISH . . . . .                                                | Champion Rider of the World                |                        |
| TONY LOWANDE . . . . .                                                   | Principal Hurdle, Four and Six Horse Rider |                        |
| CHARLES WATSON . . . . .                                                 | Hurdle and Four Horse Rider                |                        |
| WILLIAM M. DAVENE . . . . .                                              | Aëriel Gymnast                             |                        |
| SATSUMA . . . . .                                                        | Japanese Juggler, Globe and Table Dancer   |                        |
| ANDREW GAFFNEY . . . . .                                                 | Cannon-ball Manipulator                    |                        |
| WILLIAM HARBECK . . . . .                                                | Contortionist                              |                        |
| TOM WATSON . . . . .                                                     | Gymnast and Acrobat                        |                        |
| WILLIAM M. THOMPSON . . . . .                                            | Performer of Elephants                     |                        |
| JAMES W. WHITE . . . . .                                                 | Ring Master Ring No. 1                     |                        |
| ANDREW GAFFNEY . . . . .                                                 | Ring Master Ring No. 2                     |                        |
| WM. CARROLL, BERT RICHARDSON, } . . . . .                                | Clowns                                     |                        |
| CHARLES PETTIT, TOM WATSON, }                                            |                                            |                        |
| PERFORMING ANIMALS.                                                      |                                            |                        |
| 2 Performing Ponies.                                                     | 2 Trick Horses.                            |                        |
| \$125,000 Herd of 8 Performing Elephants, and the Clown Elephant "Jack." |                                            |                        |
| WILD WEST CONTINGENT.                                                    |                                            |                        |
| Texas Jack, Jr.                                                          | Broncho Bob                                | Arizona Bill           |
| Nebraska Joe                                                             | Rattlesnake Charlie                        | Candlegrease Charlie   |
| Buckskin Bill                                                            | Dude Milliken                              | Shorty Watson          |
| COW-BOYS' GALS.                                                          |                                            |                        |
| Arizona Sal                                                              | Sucker Flat Mary                           | Soapsuds Fan           |
| Lippy Liz                                                                | Red-head Hannah                            |                        |
| IRIQUOIS INDIANS.                                                        |                                            |                        |
| Chief White Cloud                                                        | Peter Danay                                | Dick Danay             |
| Augus Dibo                                                               | Joe Stacey                                 | Running Stream         |
| Red Boy                                                                  | Little Deer                                | Longfellow             |
| Broken Arrow                                                             | Lizzie Dana                                | Little Dick (Pappoose) |
|                                                                          | 13 Bronchos.                               |                        |
| MISTRESS OF WARDROBE.                                                    |                                            |                        |
| Mrs. Mary Watson.                                                        |                                            |                        |
| CONCERT.                                                                 |                                            |                        |
| String Band, six pieces.                                                 |                                            |                        |
| William Milligan . . . . .                                               | Dutch and Irish Comedian, Manager          |                        |
| Miss Mattie Bliss . . . . .                                              | Soprano                                    |                        |

A page from the 1888 Robbins route book. Pfening Archives.

did not interfere with business the next day at Clare. A comment was made that Robbins must have been satisfied with business to date when compared with other shows. Knowing what we have chronologized to this point, Robbins' business was nothing to get excited about, so if there is any truth in the belief that his show was doing better than most, 1888 must have been a very bad year. Shortly thereafter, Colvin returned from a business trip to Chicago and reported that Barnum & Bailey released 20 performers at the conclusion of the Chicago date. A check of the 1888 Barnum & Bailey route book revealed that the season up to Chicago appeared quite good and the Chicago date was characterized as "big." As this was the first season of James A. Bailey's return, he may have been eliminating some perceived "fat" in the organization or it

may be that show added special acts for the important Chicago date.

Excellent business continued for the next couple of days as the show took a long jump to the shores of Lake Michigan at Mainstay on June 11. Despite the fact that Barnum & Bailey was heavily billed for a date in about a month, business seemed unaffected. Charles Fish lost his horse Fred because of a heart attack the next day at Ludington, but the show enjoyed both the pleasant breezes off Lake Michigan and a throng of patrons. The next four days saw good afternoon and poor evening houses, closing out the week at Traverse City.

The show made a 176 mile jump directly south on Sunday, reaching Grand Haven in the afternoon. On a very hot day, it was hardly worth the effort as customers were scarce. The show then headed directly east to Romeo on the 22nd, and Mt. Clemens, just north of Detroit, on the 23rd. For the most part the weather was very hot, affecting business negatively. This condition wasn't the case at Mt. Pleasant which enjoyed a temperature described by its moniker. Still business was only fair. As if in an attempt to escape these doldrums of mediocrity, Robbins took a great leap to the southwestern part of Michigan, reaching Cassopolis late on Sunday on the 24th, after a 250 mile trip.

Rain may have affected the take the next day, so there weren't may smiles in the ticket wagon. It wasn't any better as the show traveled east again, ending the week at Wyandotte, a few miles south of Detroit, to poor business. Barnum & Bailey was to visit Detroit for a single date in less than a fortnight and Wyandottians must have been made aware of such a fact. Was Michigan worth the trip? It doesn't seem so. It may be that other shows were also suffering, but perhaps they could



afford to. Robbins could hardly be pleased.

He was still attempting to flesh out his late summer and fall route. To this end, he apparently wrote his friend, John F. Robinson, regarding his opinion on a proposed route. Robinson advised that as "I told you last winter, I did not expect to take much of the South and don't want to interfere with your route if possible. Notice I have left what I think is the best part of Virginia for you which is the Orange and Alexandria RR, Petersburg and Richmond RR. This country is getting a little warm politically and will be more so week after next. After the week of July 16th I will be there at Terrace Park, Hamilton Co. Ohio. Please answer there as I will not run into you. If I can get out of using some of territory, will do so."

It must have worked out as Robbins did play Virginia in late September and early October. It is obvious from the Bailey and Robinson letters that Robbins' integrity was held in the highest regard by these captains of circusdom.

But now to territory that was the old stomping grounds for the show, New York state. A long Sunday jump took the it across Canada, just north of Lake Erie, to a Monday stand at Niagara Falls on July 2. Once again the great effort to get there did not justify the reception by the towners. Business was even worse the next day at nearby Tonawanda. At least one did not have to travel an entire day as it was only a 10 mile jump. After an excellent afternoon house at Springville on Independence Day, the night house was practically empty. This experience was replicated at Ellicottsville and the entry stand in Pennsylvania at Dubois on July 6. Finally a biggie was had at Punxsutawney with no groundhogs noted in the very large audiences. The short Pennsylvania visit

ended at Ringway on the 7th, where business equated to the weather, both good. It was back in New York at Jamestown. The local paper noted that there were large houses and the performance gave great satisfaction. The *Clipper's* correspondent also reported essentially an identical report. However the route book said "strange to say a poor afternoon house, and only a fair house at night." You figure. Bad business was experienced for the remainder of the week which ended at Hornellsville on the 14th. Charlie Fish, author of the route book, commented at this point that it was "a remarkable fact that,

OK. Almost the entire week was spent in Tioga County. Interestingly, it was both Tioga County in Pennsylvania and Tioga County in New York. It finished up at Owego, New York on July 20 before reentering Pennsylvania on Saturday at Carbondale, just north of Scranton, for another OK day. On Monday the 23rd, it was north again to Susquehanna, which was a couple of miles from the New York border. It was a fine day, even with a long uphill haul to the lot. However the good could not prevail the entire 24 hour period as the railroad yard engineers yanked a draw head out of a flat, delaying departing on a long 100 plus mile jump by 3 hours. And that was not all.

Charlie the elephant hadn't been particularly active since spring. Making up for this oversight, he attacked his keeper, breaking the man's collar bone and some ribs. In addition, Charlie severely cut up his victim, causing him to be removed to a private house for an extended recovery period. The next stand, Honesdale, was but 20 miles from Carbondale as the crow flies, yet over 100 miles trip by rail. For once, an overland show could probably have arrived sooner than Robbins. A late arrival didn't help business any which turned into a fair day in fine weather.

En route to its next stand at Monticello on July 25, disaster struck. As reported by the *Monticello Republican* on July 27th "[a]n accident occurred on the Port Jervis, Monticello and New York Railroad recently

which resulted in two valuable trick elephants and two sacred bulls, belonging to Frank A. Robbins' Circus, being burned to death. The clown elephant (Jack), which was one of those lost, was probably the best trained and most intelligent animal in the country. It had been in constant training for seven years, and could do and understand almost

**ROUTE==1888.**

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**Frank A. Robbins' New Shows**

**Commenced Season of 1888 at Frenchtown, N. J.**

(WINTER QUARTERS.)

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**Saturday, April 21st.** FRENCHTOWN, Hunterdon Co., N. J.  
Population, 1,066.  
Weather, clear and cold. With frigid smile we grab with shivering hand the hands (one after another) of many old and new companions *du voyage*; and, judging from report and the *ensemble*, I predict a sociably pleasant season. May our parting be postponed to the farthest limit of time consistent with financial interest, and be as agreeable personally as our meeting. In spite of the severe weather, business is up to the average of former years. To the most uninterested of observers, the fact is plain, that Mr. Robbins and all who represent him in this his Winter Quarters, are honored with the good will and friendship of the entire population—a friendship not misplaced.

**Monday, April 23d.** LAMBERTVILLE, Hunterdon Co., N. J.  
Population, 4,067. Penn. Ry. 16 miles.  
A cold, rainy morning greeted us, as we opened our car doors,—the change from yesterday's sunny warmth making this all the more uncomfortable. Towards noon the clouds began to break, and later the sun peeped forth and thawed us out a little. A light, but appreciative gathering of circus-hungry people braved the temperature this afternoon, supplemented by a larger gathering of Lambertvillians at night.

**Tuesday, April 24th.** BRISTOL, Bucks Co., Pa.  
Population, 5,273. Penn. Ry. 28 Miles.  
A bustling, thriving, manufacturing town. Amongst other things produced, the most important are hosiery, carpets, cloths, and cotton goods. Being near Philadelphia, we were not surprised at seeing a number of prominent professionals, whose interest in the "coming man" increases as they view the healthy growth of the little Napoleon of the circus world. Our old friend, "Jack" Holmes of museum fame, Brooklyn, N. Y., Mr. Frank Kelsh, the veteran advance agent, and Mr. Hamilton, advance agent of the Wallace show, viewed the ring performance from the reserved seats under the big white tent. Our afternoon business was light, but at night the business was all that could be desired. Small boys between the ages of 14 and 18 annoyed the canvasmen very much during the day by firing stones and other missiles at them, their numbers and small size protecting them from retaliation.

A page from the 1888 Robbins route book. Pfening Archives.

just above the line of Pennsylvania [and New York], business is comparatively poor, and just below the line it is markedly good."

The weather was fine for the next week and business improved somewhat, being best characterized as



everything. The other elephant (Billy) was a baby born in this country, and was also very intelligent. The buffaloes were valued at \$1000 each. . . . [W]e are informed that the proprietor of Robbins' circus has instituted or is about to commence proceedings against the P. J., M. & N. Y. R. R. Co., for the loss of his elephants and buffaloes by fire Wednesday morning, putting the damages way up in the thousands. Judge Howell of the Monticello road informs the *Union* that he has heard of no such suit. The officials of the road are positive that the fire was not caused by sparks from the locomotive, but from the pipes of the men lying in bunks in the car. The engine some time ago was supplied with a spark arrester, with very fine meshes, in the Erie shops."

In another article, the *Republican* noted that "[t]he disposal of the dead bodies of the two elephants belonging to the Robbins' circus that were burned on the railroad was no easy matter. The largest elephant weighed 35 cwt. and the smallest 30 cwt. One body was drawn down to Cantrell's crossing and sunk in a quagmire, and the other had to be burned up where it lay. The nearby Port Jervis newspaper provided a few additional details of the unfortunate incident: "Owning to the heavy grade on the Monticello road it was found necessary to divide the nineteen cars, composing the circus, into three parts. The first two sections reached Monticello in safety, but shortly afterward Engineer Hugh Williamson discovered that the second car of the third section was on fire and he immediately stopped that train. When the side doors of the car were opened a volume of flame shot out and the elephants were trumpeting wildly. The fire spread with much rapidity, and it was with difficulty the two men who were asleep in the car made their escape. Both the

elephants were dead when they were reached, but one of the buffaloes was still alive. The cause of the fire is unknown. The car was filled with loose hay and straw, which accounts for the rapid spread of the flames. The accident happened in a cut, and it was found necessary to chop off the legs of one of the elephants before the rear portion of the train could pass."

It would appear that the threatened suit was never filed because there wasn't any further mention of it in the local press. However in summary, it was an accident that

of Jack the clown elephant is not known. However given the innumerable positive reviews of Jack's performing skills, he may have been the most valuable elephant in America since Jumbo. It was a huge loss. Also noteworthy was the size of the train, 19 cars. Monticello was a railroad center and like other similar towns, had a section on the front page of the local papers devoted to railroad news. They probably had train movement sheets which accurately described the train consist. We had previously cited the route book which

described in detail a somewhat larger train. Could there have been some cut-backs because of the lack of business? Maybe so, but it wasn't reported.

Notwithstanding the setback in losing four animals at Monticello, business was good at this location, and it continued in that vein at Port Jervis on the 26th. At the former location, the show was reported to be the best ever to visit the village. The *Republican* provided this tidbit on the Wild West portion of the presentation: "The cowboy illustrations of life on the plains, the attack, capture and repulse of Indians were thrilling, and at the same time valuable as showing a life that will be a thing of the past in another generation. Take it all together it is doubtful if a better and more instructive exhibition was ever put on the road in the United States." Such favorable comments did not inhibit the paper from providing a detailed account of a redistribution of local wealth in the direction of

the circus slicky boys. It never ceases to amaze this writer that the locals were so willing to report how they were duped in gambling. It isn't as if they weren't adequately warned in advance.

Fairly good business continued at Middletown where the *Orange County Press* especially enjoyed the seven elephant act and the wild west

Monday, August 27th.

ASHLAND, Schuylkill Co., Pa.

Population, 6,052. L. V. and P. & R. Rys. 8 miles.

Weather, cloudy. Business, only fair. This is one of the most eventful days in the history of this show. Mr. Robbins was called away from the show on business. About noon George Lorey, one of the musicians of the big show band, was so interested in searching for "Sulphur Diamonds," along the railroad track back of the dressing-room, that he did not notice the approach of a train on the same track. Indian Dick yelled to him, and saved his life, but not soon enough to have him escape a blow from the locomotive, which struck him in the small of the back, knocking him about 20 feet. He fell on a stone, cutting his forehead very badly, and giving him a pretty good shaking up all around. He will be laid up for several days. Jim McCarty, who was thrown from his wagon by a team running away with him and had his collarbone broken and otherwise bruised in Tamaqua, left the show today for his home. The day was finished by the terrible death of Paul P. Beaver, porter of car No. 9. According to the evidence at the inquest, it appears that he was last seen alive sitting on the rails of the main track, his head resting on his right hand as though thinking. He was told a train was due in a short time, but seemed to pay little if any attention to the warning, merely mumbling some reply too low to be understood by the witness. After the departure of the train, which arrived at 8.53 o'clock, one of the men employed about the cars came running up to the depot, and told Eddie West that *Paul was dead*. Two or three of the company went back about 70 yards and found his body. Life was extinct. His right arm above the wrist, his right leg below the knee, and his head, were all severed from the body. A telegram was immediately sent to his brother, H. Beaver, No. 1054, 10th Ave., New York City, and all done that was possible by Mr. Colvin. He was universally liked by all, and had endeared himself to both Mr. and Mrs. Colvin by his more than attention to simple duties. He went beyond that, and it is not saying too much in asserting, that no employee was ever more sincerely mourned. A gloom hangs o'er us all.

Tuesday, August 28th.

MT. CARMEL, Northumberland Co., Pa.

Population, 1,257. L. V. and Phil. & Reading Ry. 21 miles.

A pleasant day, rather cool—overcoats very comfortable morning and evening. We are all feeling sad and depressed over the terrible affair of yesterday. A message from H. Beaver orders the remains of his brother to be sent to New York. Mr. Colvin sent a letter of condolence and sympathy to him, together with all his (Paul's) effects and statement of money due. Selah. Afternoon house, poor; night house, good.

Wednesday, August 29th.

SHAMOKIN, Northumberland Co., Pa.

Population, 8,184. L. V. and Phila. & Rdg. Ry's. 11 miles.

Weather, during the night, quite cold—moderated during the day. The lot is badly situated on a steep side-hill, very stony and hard—ring very poor in consequence. Afternoon house, poor; night house, good.

A page from the 1888 Robbins route book. Pfening Archives.

Robbins could ill afford. As previously related, at least 8 of the elephants were leased from Adam Forepaugh (Billy being one). It is presumed that the leasing agreement would assign responsibility for accidents to Robbins. The ownership



scene that closed the show, playing to a half house in the evening. The *Press* also stated that the people of Monticello and vicinity were swindled out of more than \$1,000 on circus day. The show closed out the week with good business at Goshen, New York on the 28th where it was reported to be the largest and best ever at that location.

It was fairly long Sunday jump north to Arkville, New York which is edge of the Catskill Mountains. In this resort community, business was good in the afternoon but nil at night. The company started across the north-eastern corner of the Catskills to Phoenicia for the 31st which provided splendid scenery but mixed business. The next day, the show reached Kingston which was a former capital of New York and a large river port on the Hudson. *The Kingston Daily Freeman* discussed the parade in some detail, "The procession was headed by a prettily uniformed brass band, riding in a large chariot. Among the notable features were men and women in armor, animal dens surmounted by Chinamen and masqueraders, a cage containing lions and their keeper, monkeys riding ponies, a band of cowboys, Wild West paraders, Indians with squaw riding a horse attached to poles showing manner conveying goods and children in the Northwest, glass cage containing a woman playing with a boa constrictor, seven elephants, Highland bag pipers and Continentals, and a steam calliope on wheels." The paper enjoyed the performance very much commenting "[o]ne pleasing feature about the show is that everything was given just as advertised." After a good day at Cossackie, the show returned to the banks of the Hudson at Catskill on August 3 for a good day at the ticket wagon. The week ended with another date on the Hudson at Haverstraw where a downpour pre-

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                        |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| <b>Thursday, May 3d.</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <b>LEWISTOWN, Mifflin Co., Pa.</b>     |
| Population, 3,222. Penn. Ry. 12 miles.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                        |
| This morning greeted us with a strong white frost. The elephant, Charlie, tried his strength again this morning by knocking over another man, but fortunately doing him no harm. Business, fair.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                        |
| <b>Friday, May 4th.</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <b>TYRONE, Blair Co., Pa.</b>          |
| Population, 2,578. Penn. Ry. 58 miles.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                        |
| Weather, fair until 5 P. M. A heavy rain then spoiled the night house. Business, poor. A tough night on the working men.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                        |
| <b>Saturday, May 5th.</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <b>HOUTZDALE, Clearfield Co., Pa.</b>  |
| Population, 2,060. Penn. Ry. 25 miles.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                        |
| Late in getting the canvas up—a long, steep hill all the way to the lot, which is full of stumps, and the canvas heavy from the rain and mud of yesterday. Weather, cooler and clear. Business, fair. Night house, very good. Louise Arnot Dramatic Company played here tonight at the opera house, and had a good house at cheap prices.—Considerable excitement was created, and for awhile a panic was feared, on account of some one speaking out loud of a fire in the neighborhood. Some of the audience became frightened, and a rush was made for the doors. Some of our people were present, who, with the coolness of Mr. — and Miss Arnot, succeeded in calming down the fear that had seized the people, and the performance was resumed and continued without further incident. |                                        |
| <b>Monday, May 7th.</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <b>CLEARFIELD, Clearfield Co., Pa.</b> |
| Population, 1,808. Penn. Ry. 26½ miles.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                        |
| Weather, warm and clear. Business, fair.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                        |
| <b>Tuesday, May 8th.</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <b>PHILIPSBURG, Centre Co., Pa.</b>    |
| Population, 1,779. Penn. Ry. 17 miles.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                        |
| Weather, pleasant this forenoon; dusky in the afternoon; rain at night. Business, fair. Mr. Davene could not appear this evening on account of a very severe attack of inflammatory rheumatism.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                        |
| <b>Wednesday, May 9th.</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <b>HOLLIDAYSBURG, Blair Co., Pa.</b>   |
| Population, 3,150. Penn. Ry. 43½ miles.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                        |
| A rain and hail storm of considerable violence struck us just as the doors were opened this afternoon, spoiling our day's business. The lot was like a swamp, being flat and soft. No act depending on the ring could be done. It was found necessary to haul all the empty wagons from the lot to the street, and even then it required eight horses to pull some of the empty wagons through the mud; consequently, our departure from town was delayed. Mr. Davene still unable to appear.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                        |
| <b>Thursday, May 10th.</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <b>JOHNSTOWN, Cambria Co., Pa.</b>     |
| Population, 8,380. B. & O. and Penn. Ry. 43½ miles.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                        |
| A very busy town, and surrounded by other towns equally as pro-                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                        |

A page from the 1888 Robbins route book. Pfening Archives.

vented a big night house.

Long Island was scheduled with a week's worth of stands commencing at Flushing on August 6, and ending at Hemstead 11th. As always, the Islanders turned out for the show, although not in as great numbers as on previous occasions. Night houses were excellent throughout the week. Weather was very close and hot during the early part of the week but turned pleasant at midweek. Very negative advance notices preceded the show at Hemstead where the *World* reported there was a gang of thieves following the circus through the Orange, Ulster and Delaware Counties in New York. It stated that the gang would probably not follow the circus as far as Long Island but "be prepared." This justified warning did not inhibit the locals from flocking to the show and nothing unto-

ward was detected. Lots of the performers and staff journeyed to New York City after the night show for a Sunday stay there. On Monday the 13th, the show was on the other side of New York City in New Jersey at the coastal town of Red Bank. The good houses there were exceeded at Long Branch where the night performance was packed with very pleased locals. The big night house was repeated at the ocean resort town of Asbury Park on the 15th. A very big day at Atlantic City on the 18th was anticipated, but was left wanting because of a deluge. This downpour left the lot a lake. The big top was struck and was placed in another portion of the lot to no avail. The show finally packed up around 8 P.M., having never performed at all. Although the Robbins show had lost performances in the past, it was the first time that no performance was given at all.

The troupe then took a mighty leap to Bangor, Pennsylvania on August 20, where railroad delays prevented a early arrival, spending all of Sunday and a fair portion of Monday morning en route. Still, a good day's business was had. This was not the case the next day at Tamaqua where it poured all day, causing a blank afternoon house and a theater performance at night. The show continued into the Pennsylvania coal country, playing to only fair business, with afternoons being poor and the nights much better being the norm. At Ashland, Pennsylvania on the 27th, not only mediocre houses greeted the show, but disaster as well. Musician George Lorey got hit by a train in back of the dressing room but survived the impact. A much worse fate awaited car porter Paul Beaver, who was last seen sitting on the railroad track, in thought. Those thoughts must have been very deep because he was literally in pieces when next observed. Apparently he was very



well liked by his colleagues and his death depressed the entire company for days. Business continued to be marginal as the show continued its Pennsylvania tour well into September. It wasn't only the business that was clouding the horizon, but more problems in transit. While en route from Troy to Lock Haven on September 4, a conductor's lamp exploded, causing a flat to catch fire, destroying the flat. It also destroyed a bandwagon and steam calliope. The fire also damaged three cages containing monkeys and birds. Damages were believed to exceed \$5,000.

Rain started to plague the show during the latter days of its Pennsylvania tour. Precipitation coupled with cold weather and smallish towns did nothing to help at the box office. It got so bad that because of a derailing of flat and elephant cars in Ebensburg on September 19 a late arrival at Bedford resulted. An excursion train of ten cars from nearby Frostburg, Maryland returned there with a trainload of disappointed patrons who never got to see their circus. The next day, the show played Cumberland, Maryland in the western part of the state. Business did not please. The troupe proceeded south down the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia. It played three one-show-only days which are never a plus at the box office before arriving at Harrisonburg on the 26th where two good houses were had.

Robbins had a big day at Staunton on September 28, playing at the fair grounds during the fair. Charlottesville was OK and the show finally hit a big one at Richmond on the first day of October. It garnered much needed revenue the next day at Hampton, but the very small village of Williamsburg did nothing to line the purse of the owner. Following one-show-only days at a couple of

Monday, August 27th.

ASHLAND, Schuylkill Co., Pa.  
Population, 6,052. L. V. and P. & R. Rys. 8 miles.

Weather, cloudy. Business, only fair. This is one of the most eventful days in the history of this show. Mr. Robbins was called away from the show on business. About noon George Lorey, one of the musicians of the big show band, was so interested in searching for "Sulphur Diamonds," along the railroad track back of the dressing-room, that he did not notice the approach of a train on the same track. Indian Dick yelled to him, and saved his life, but not soon enough to have him escape a blow from the locomotive, which struck him in the small of the back, knocking him about 20 feet. He fell on a stone, cutting his forehead very badly, and giving him a pretty good shaking up all around. He will be laid up for several days. Jim McCarty, who was thrown from his wagon by a team running away with him and had his collarbone broken and otherwise bruised in Tamaqua, left the show today for his home. The day was finished by the terrible death of Paul P. Beaver, porter of car No. 9. According to the evidence at the inquest, it appears that he was last seen alive sitting on the rails of the main track, his head resting on his right hand as though thinking. He was told a train was due in a short time, but seemed to pay little if any attention to the warning, merely mumbling some reply too low to be understood by the witness. After the departure of the train, which arrived at 8.53 o'clock, one of the men employed about the cars came running up to the depot, and told Eddie West that *Paul was dead*. Two or three of the company went back about 70 yards and found his body. Life was extinct. His right arm above the wrist, his right leg below the knee, and his head, were all severed from the body. A telegram was immediately sent to his brother, H. Beaver, No. 1054, 10th Ave., New York City, and all done that was possible by Mr. Colvin. He was universally liked by all, and had endeared himself to both Mr. and Mrs. Colvin by his more than attention to simple duties. He went beyond that, and it is not saying too much in asserting, that no employee was ever more sincerely mourned. A gloom hangs o'er us all.

Tuesday, August 28th.

MT. CARMEL, Northumberland Co., Pa.  
Population, 1,257. L. V. and Phil. & Reading Ry. 21 miles.

A pleasant day, rather cool—overcoats very comfortable morning and evening. We are all feeling sad and depressed over the terrible affair of yesterday. A message from H. Beaver orders the remains of his brother to be sent to New York. Mr. Colvin sent a letter of condolence and sympathy to him, together with all his (Paul's) effects and statement of money due. Selah. Afternoon house, poor; night house, good.

Wednesday, August 29th.

SHAMOKIN, Northumberland Co., Pa.  
Population, 8,184. L. V. and Phila. & Rdg. Ry's. 11 miles.

Weather, during the night, quite cold—moderated during the day. The lot is badly situated on a steep side-hill, very stony and hard—ring very poor in consequence. Afternoon house, poor; night house, good.

A page from the 1888 Robbins route book. Pfening Archives.

locations, Alexandria on October 6 experienced rain at night which cut mightily into what otherwise may have been a big day. However in the October 13th issue of the *Clipper*, a correspondent penned that the show has had a long, prosperous season. "Business has been good, weather fine and money plenty from a person who knows." Did he really?

As the season was drawing to a close, the show ventured onto the Delmarva Peninsular for the first time since the spring of 1886. The opening day at Middletown, Delaware on October 8 was just mediocre in cool weather. It wasn't much better the next day at Centerville, Maryland, although the locals enjoyed the excellent performance. Chestertown, Maryland on the

10th added a modicum of humor to an otherwise humorless season. The elephant car was placed next to the tender which had just been loaded with water. One of the elephants reached out and lifted the lid of the water tank. Although the tank contained over 200 gallons of water, the elephant emptied it of its contents, drinking its fill and discharging on the ground that which it didn't want. Apparently there wasn't another source of water because not until 9 a. m. the next morning was the train able to depart for Smyrna, Delaware, the next stand.

Bad weather and wheat seeding prevented many folks from attending the excellent performances at Easton, Maryland on October 12. Because of the short distance (11 miles) between Lewes and Georgetown, Delaware, business was small at both locations but the performance was considered of the highest quality throughout. At

Cambridge, Maryland on the 18th the show played at an inconvenient location at East Cambridge to avoid the town tax of \$50 which had recently been increased from \$10. It did little good for the town or the circus. The closing day of the season was at Salisbury, Maryland on October 20 where a fair days business was had. The slicky boys operated until the end as the three card monte game and its playmates were frequently seen.

It must have been a gloomy ride back to Frenchtown, almost 200 miles to the north. The troupe arrived there on Sunday afternoon. And even then the black cloud was not lifted as a roustabout had his foot crushed when a center pole fell upon it. The *Frenchtown Star* reported that Frank A. Robbins and E. W. Opdyke departed for Virginia on Monday, October 12 to sell horses



that Robbins had located there instead wintering them. Opdyke was not identified but it is suspected that he was a local banker.

After a dearth of information in trade publications for some time, the *Clipper* advised on November 10th that Robbins visited its offices and indicated that he had had a satisfactory season. He hinted that he had big plans for the oncoming season. In the following issue, he offered five Fielding cages, a black yak, an antelope and a lioness for \$1,500. He was still trying to dispose of that 45 foot flat and the 64 person box sleeper for \$600. In the December 15th issue of the *Clipper*, he advertised for attractions of all kinds for the 1889 season, listing a variety of performing types. He designated the opening date of April 20, 1889.

So the big 1888 season was completed, undoubtedly not in the fashion Robbins anticipated. There were accomplishments. He did expand his route to new areas in Pennsylvania and Ohio. He also explored a fair-sized area in Michigan. Lastly, he routed the show into the Tidewater

and Shenandoah regions of Virginia for a number of new dates.

He received positive reviews regarding the performance, and cleverly managed to remain at arms length from the various forms of grift that were often present on and about the show grounds. As always, he manifested optimism about the future. However, he had never sold his horses before and perhaps never traveled with his friendly banker to accomplish a sale of show property. It was never necessary before. It was not a good sign.

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by James W. Raab

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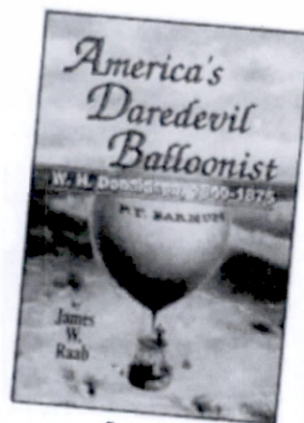


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# CIRCUS SEASON 2001



Frederick Whitman Glasier, American, 1866-1950  
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- ♦ Sat, Dec 9, 2000 1:30pm > Peggy Williams, Director of Education, Feld, Inc.
- ♦ Sat, Jan 13, 2001 1:30pm > Deborah Walk, Curator, Ringling Museum of the Circus
- ♦ Sat, Feb 10, 2001 1:30pm > Charlie and Kitty Smith, Logistics
- ♦ Sat, Mar 10, 2001 1:30pm > Tim Holst, Vice President for Talent & Production, Feld, Inc.
- ♦ Sat, Apr 14, 2001 1:30pm > Rodney Huey, Vice President for Public Relations, Feld, Inc.
- ♦ Sat, May 12, 2001 1:30pm > "Junior" Ruffin: Clyde-Beatty Circus Animal Trainer
- ♦ Sat, June 9, 2001 1:30pm > Jackie LeClair, Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus Clown

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Saturday, January 27, 2001 12:30-3:00pm Run Away and Join the Circus  
Saturday, June 9, 2001 12:30-3:00pm Lions, and Tigers and Bears, OH my!

*Center Ring Talks and Friends and Family Days are made possible with support from the State of Florida, Florida Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs, the Florida Arts Council, and the National Endowment for the Arts, and our generous members, sponsors, and contributors.*

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# The Elephants Named Columbus

By Stuart Thayer

In the January-February, 1987 *Bandwagon* we published an article titled "The Elephant in America Before 1840." On page 21 of that issue we gave a version of the history of the elephant Columbus. Imported in December 1817 by Hachaliah Bailey, George Brunn and Isaac Purdy, the animal was exhibited as a single for the first seven years of his life in America. He was only the fourth elephant to be imported to this country, and the first male. We reported on his career until his supposed death in 1851, but now must revise that to 1829. What it amounts to is that there were two elephants named Columbus.

In the *Weekly Gleaner* of Salem, North Carolina on 14 April 1829, there is the following article:

"The celebrated elephant Columbus died on Sunday evening last: this docile and sagacious animal was 26 years old, and weighed 8,121 pounds. He was brought from Calcutta in the ship Columbus (whose name he bore) in 1815 [actually 1817], since which period he has traveled to every part of the continent. Several years since, in one of the southern states, in attempting to go out of a door, he pulled down the house, and injured one of his legs, which injury has since proved the cause of his death. The body was purchased for the Philadelphia Museum, and his skin and skeleton are now preparing, and will shortly be added to their extensive collection."

Tom Parkinson wrote to me in July 1993 of his research in the American Philosophical Society library into the records of Peale's museum. On March 23, 1829, Peale called a special meeting of the board to get authorization to buy the carcass of the performing elephant Columbus, which had died the day before. He received the board's approval to spend \$325, and on March

This 1851 Raymond newspaper ad lists the second Columbus. Pfening Archives.

24, reported that the skeleton was preserved. He then requested funds to preserve the skin. The specimen was on display at the museum for the next nineteen years.

Peale went broke in 1848, and the sales catalogue of the auction listed Columbus, plus a rhinoceros, and a

giraffe, all mounted specimens. Moses Kimball bought them for his museum in Boston.

Since there was an elephant named Columbus with the J. R. and William Howe, Jr. New York Menagerie in December 1832, it was obvious that one of the elephants

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B. J. HUNT, Agent



then in the country had been renamed. Our candidate for this honor is the animal Mogul.

Mogul was imported May 14, 1831, on the brig *Neponset*, having been loaded in Calcutta. He was a nine-year old male, and was put on exhibition by Zebedee Macomber, manager of Macomber & Co.'s New Collection of Living Animals. In Baltimore in December 1831, a menagerie using the generic title Grand Menagerie of Living Animals had the calf Timour and an unnamed full-grown elephant. This was a winter show of combined menageries, and we, think Mogul was the adult animal. Both Timour and Mogul were Macomber animals, thus it would seem that his was one of the parts of this Grand Menagerie. Neither Mogul nor Macomber appear in any advertisements we've found for the summer touring season of


1832. We know that Macomber went to Africa in the winter of 1832 to capture animals for the Boston Zoological Association, a trip he also made in 1833 and 1834.

As we said, an animal named Columbus was part of J. R. and William Howe, Jr.'s menagerie in New York in December 1832. These gentlemen were the nephews of Epenetus Howe, with whom Macomber had been a partner in previous years. Since Mogul disappears at the time Columbus reappears, we make the obvious conclusion. It was this ex-Mogul whom we follow as Columbus from December 1832 to his death in 1851.

As a name, Mogul reappears in 1834. Gregory, Washburn & Co., a new title in October of that year, had the elephant Timour (Macomber was again in South Africa that winter), which they re-named Mogul. In the

same season Macomber's catch from his trip in the winter of 1833 arrived in Hingham, Massachusetts on board the ship *Susan*. In its cargo was a male elephant. The entire shipment was used to frame Macomber, Welch & Co. He was given no name that we can find in 1834 advertising, but in 1835 he was called Mogul. In 1835 both of these caravans were part of the Zoological Institute, and each continued to have a Mogul. In 1836, Gregory, Washburn was one of the outfits dropped from the Institute, and we haven't a clue as to what happened to their elephant. Macomber, Welch & Co. (by then the Boston unit of the Institute), including Mogul, was lost in the sinking of the steamboat *Royal Tar* off Maine in 1836.

It wasn't until 1851 that another elephantine Mogul made an appearance. One of the eight imports from Ceylon that P. T. Barnum brought over in that year was so-named.



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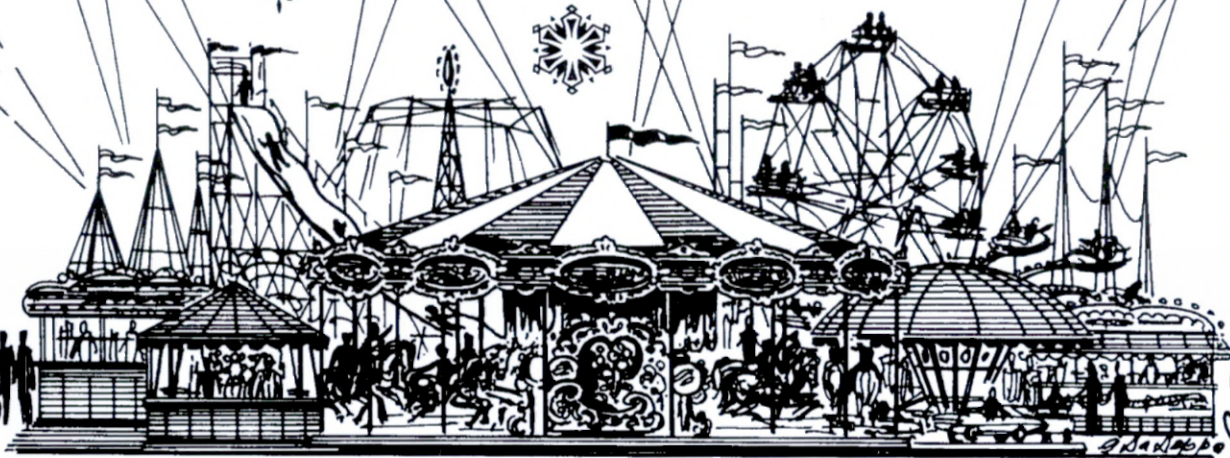




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# Happy Holidays!

JIM ELLIOTT  
GENERAL MANAGER





# The 2000 Circus Historical Society Convention

Early arrivals gathered in the lobby of Normal, Illinois' Best Western University Inn the afternoon of Wednesday, September 6, to register for the Circus Historical Society convention to renew acquaintances and greet first-timers. The only official function that evening was the Trustees' meeting, which was reported in the September-October *Bandwagon*.

Among those in attendance was Joseph T. Bradbury, former CHS president and well known circus author, who was attending his first CHS convention. Another special guest was aerialist Mickey King, who began her sawdust career in the 1920s.

The first session of the convention took place the following morning as president Richard J. Reynolds, III, welcomed all to the Bone Student Center of Illinois State University, where all papers were presented. Reynolds reported on the trustee's meeting the night before. Stuart Thayer led off with a fascinating illustrated lecture on "Early Circus

Bandwagons." We were then directed to Bloomington's historic Grand Hotel (Hostelry to the Flyers), for a luncheon with famed aerialist Mickey King, who proved to be delightful hostess, answering numerous questions and posing for photographs.

The delegation next moved to the Interstate Center where they were made welcome by Barbara Miller Byrd and Gary Byrd, owners of the Carson and Barnes Circus. Refreshments and souvenirs were distributed. Barbara gave a short talk on the history and management of the show. Barbara's late father, D. R. Miller, attended his last CHS convention in Los Angeles in 1999. The open air menagerie with both Asiatic and African elephants, a giraffe and a pigmy hippopotamus occupied the conventionaires for an hour before the performance. The CHS group was

The convention group in the center ring of the Carson & Barnes Circus. Photo by John Polacsek.

seated in front of the center ring in comfortable chairs.

Following the performance the group assembled in the center ring for a group photograph taken by John Polacsek. Baby Jennie, the diminutive pachydermic star of the show, with trainer Tim Frisco joined in for the picture. Each conventioneer later received an 8 x 10 print of the photo.

All scattered for supper at various locations around town; a surprising number landed at the Lucca Grill for excellent Italian fare.

Friday was a full day of papers. The morning session, presided over by Dave Price, featured Fred Dahlinger's paper, "Thundering through the Dawn, Circus Trains of Steel;" followed by Linda Fisher with "Agnes Lake: Farmer's Daughter to Circus Star;" and closed with Judy Griffin giving a report on her research on the life of James L. Hutchinson, the third partner in Barnum & London and a relative of





Ms. Griffin's. She told of the existence of a large group of historical letters from the Hutchinson estate.

Richard Reynolds presided in the early afternoon and brought us Bill Slout with "Two Rings and a Hipodrome Track" and Kristin Spangenberg's "The Key to Strobridge Lithographing Company Circus Posters." She showed a number of slides of Strobridge lithographs in the Cincinnati Art Museum collection. During her presentation she explained the numbering system used by Strobridge.

The group then moved next door to the Milner Library to view the extensive repository of lithographs, photographs, correspondence and other circus ephemera. A number of outstanding lithos and route books were displayed. Curator Steve Gossard guided the group through the collection.

The last event of the day was the annual auction with John Polacek manning the gavel, Bob and Susan Sabia handling the bookkeeping and with the able assistance of gophers Robert Sugarman and Nigel Rothfels, \$3,712 was brought in by the sale thanks to the generosity of donors and buyers alike.

Saturday, our final day, began with Fred Dahlinger presiding. Speakers were David Brett Mizelle reading his "The Downfall of Taste and Genius--Animal Exhibitions and the



Steve Gossard, Cherie Valentine and Joe Bradbury.

Struggle over Acceptable Leisure in the Early Nineteenth Century" and Elizabeth Frank with "Searching for Andrew Downs."

The afternoon session was chaired by Fred Pfening III, and began with Janet Davis presenting "The Life of Tiny Kline and the Evolution of

A rare Forepaugh lithograph from the Milner Library collection.



Twentieth Century American Mass Culture." Next came Cherie Valentine with her personal tribute to her family, "The Flying Valentines of Bloomington, Illinois." A panel consisting of Steve Gossard, Jerry Polacek and William Jaeger presented a look at "Gamma Phi, the Original Collegiate Circus of America. Richard Reynolds closed with, "Orange Cars and Other Things," regarding the history and color of the Ringling-Barnum train.

A fine banquet at the Bone Student Center closed the day and the convention. Following dinner President Reynolds presented Fred D. Pfening, Jr. with a plaque in appreciation of his forty years as editor of the *Bandwagon*. Pfening emotionally acknowledged the gift and stated he hoped to continue with the magazine for many years to come.

Our special guest speaker was Nigel Rothfels on, "And the Lion will Lay down with the Lamb: Carl Hagenbeck's Dreams of Paradise."

His research in the files of the Hagenbeck quarters in Hamburg, Germany provided new information on the extensive circus operations of Hagenbeck throughout the world in addition to the sale of wild animals to circuses in Europe and the United States.

The happy crowd then dispersed into the night leaving behind only popcorn sacks and wagon tracks. Dave Price.

**Special Holiday Wishes To All *Bandwagon* Readers**

**From The Pfenings  
Fred Jr. and Fred III**



## ANNOUNCING THE *FIRST SUPPLEMENT* TO A MAJOR REFERENCE WORK

*Barnumiana: A Select, Annotated Bibliography of Works By or Relating to P. T. Barnum, Including Dramatic Representations, Music, Original Art Works, Major Collections of Barnumiana, & A Barnum Chronology. First Supplement.* Compiled by A. H. Saxon. Fairfield, Conn.: Jumbo's Press, 2000.

The *First Supplement* to this work, running to approximately 100 pages, will be available around the end of 2000. The print run will be the same as was that for *Barnumiana*, with the result that copies of the Supplement will be reserved exclusively for those possessing the earlier work. At the request of a few persons, an attempt will be made to match the letter or number of each copy of the Supplement with that of the same owner's copy of *Barnumiana*. In addition, the work will again be signed by the compiler and of the same format and quality as the original—i.e., measuring 8 1/2 x 11 inches, in a comb binding with substantial plastic/vinyl cover, and printed in easy-to-read 14-point type on acid-free, all-cotton paper.

The contents and organization of the *First Supplement* follow the same unique plan found in *Barnumiana*, including a Second Preface and Index, with headings and sub-sections for Works by Barnum (broken down into Manuscripts and Published Works); Works by Others (again broken down into Manuscripts and Published Works, with the latter further divided among General works, Parodies & Burlesques, The American Museum, Tom Thumb & Company, Jenny Lind, Circus & Hippodrome, and Jumbo); Juvenilia, including works sometimes attributed to Barnum himself; Dramatic Representations (Plays, Movies, TV); Music; Original Art Works; and Major Collections of Barnumiana. As stated in the Second Preface, the *First Supplement* is an attempt not only to correct errors and add significant items that were overlooked in the original work but also to bring the bibliography down to the new millennium.

Copies of the *First Supplement* will be priced at \$25 (U.S.) including book-rate shipping expenses (surface-rate abroad). Connecticut individuals please add 6 percent sales tax. Note that a very few copies of *Barnumiana* are still available, to be sold only with the *First Supplement* at the combined price of \$70 including shipping (tax again, please). Also note that individuals or institutions owning copies of *Barnumiana* purchased through book distributors or shops will need to supply the letter or number found on their copies, since this information is presently not on file with the press. All others are requested to supply their letter or number as well, as confirmation of such information.

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# Side Lights On The Circus Business

## PART FIFTEEN

By David W. Watt

*Editor's note. The dates listed are the days the article appeared in the Janesville, Wisconsin Gazette.*

**June 6, 1914**

There is one big expense with the great circus that the average person knows very little about and that is the expense of advertising the show ahead. With the average large circus there are at least three advertising cars and from sixty to eighty men. The first man that visits your town comes, as a rule, far ahead of the first advertising car which is known as car No. 1. This is the contracting agent for the show.

On Tuesday of last week, May 26, W. H. Horton, contracting agent with the Ringling show, came to Janesville. He arrived in the morning and left for Chicago at noon. Will Horton, as he is known around the show, commenced his career in the show business with the Ringling Bros. twenty-five years ago this summer. He was then a boy less than eighteen years of age, but was bound to travel with the circus in any capacity that he might he wanted. Horton would do anything to get a start in the business. Horton's home was at Hillsborough, and when the show exhibited there, he was given a position as bill poster on Car No. 1 with the show. By attending strictly to his business, he was soon advanced from one position to another until today he is the general contracting agent of the great Ringling Shows and for many years has put in 365 days in the year, always working for the best interest of the Ringling Shows. From here Mr. Horton went east to help make arrangements for the show to enter Canada, which is no small job and needs a man of experience. Mr. Horton is one of the men that knows how.

The first of this week Car No. 1 of

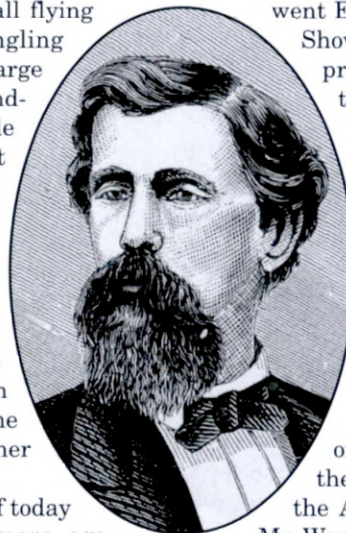
the Hagenbeck & Wallace Shows came to Janesville to cover the billboards and do the country work and has always been the custom in the business where two circuses show at the same town the same summer, although they may be many weeks apart, they have always deemed it advisable to do a little of what is known in the business as opposition work. So that the small flying squadron of the Ringling Show was here with large posters and small handbills, asking the people to wait for the great Ringlings. The stories of the different bill posters and even sometimes the managers of the cars where they outwitted the other fellow are always told by the man who has an idea that he put it all over the other fellow.

In the poster work of today and that of thirty years ago there is a great difference. In '84 which was known as the White Elephant season between the Forepaugh and Barnum Shows, was the year of real opposition work. The two shows showed side by side on Broad Street in Philadelphia for two weeks, and after leaving that city took practically the same route west to Chicago. This made it very expensive for owners for the reason that the agents were so anxious to get control of newspapers, lots and billboards that in many cases they simply asked "How much?" and gave them a check for their money. But after arriving in Chicago an agreement was signed which ended the warfare between the two great shows and not only cut the advertising

expenses of the shows in two, but also made less demand for high priced agents in the different departments. The Ringlings and Hagenbeck-Wallace shows have fixed their dates more than two months apart, yet they think it necessary to do a certain amount of opposition work along that line.

Last week John and Al Ringling went East to visit the Barnum Show of which they are proprietors and, as they thought, their visit had a good effect. They turned away people and closed the largest week's business of the season so far this year.

Joe L. Warner, circus agent. Pfening Archives.



In 1884 Joel Warner of Lansing, Michigan was the general agent ahead of the Adarn Forepaugh Show.

Mr. Warner was one of the men in the business that were known as the "big four," meaning that he was one of the four of the highest priced agents in the business. We showed at Lansing, Mr. Warner's home town that year, getting in there early Sunday morning and showing Monday. I had the pleasure of being one of a party invited to a dinner at Mr. Warner's home on Sunday evening. Now Joel Warner has routed his last show and made his last contract, for he was called by death on May 21st last.

The following letter written to a magazine gives many particulars regarding Mr. Warner's career in the business: "Lansing, Mich., May 21. At this place, which has been his home for over 60 years, Joel E. Warner,



known throughout the circus world as the man who 'discovered' Jumbo, is dead. Between seasons and at other times when not actively engaged as general agent or circus owner, Mr. Warner had found time to serve Michigan's capital city as mayor, city clerk, alderman and twice as a member of the board and fire commissioners.

"The first circus I ever saw fastened upon me a desire to become a showman," Mr. Warner had remarked a short time before his death. His first experience was with Spalding & Rogers North American Circus which he joined at New Orleans in 1853. In 1860 he was under the same management which had become known, however, as Dan Rice's Great Show. In 1873 he became sole owner of J. E. Warner's Great Pacific Menagerie and Circus. In the spring of 1876 he sold his show to California parties but remained with the attraction in a managerial capacity. In 1879 he joined the Great London Circus owned and managed by the late James A. Bailey. In 1880 when a combination was formed with P. T. Barnum and the title of Barnum, Bailey & Hutchinson's Greatest Show on Earth, Mr. Warner remained with that company as general agent. Much of his time was spent abroad as the American representative of the great circus. In this capacity he was accorded full authority to purchase attractions for the American show. His first great strike was the discovery and purchase of the elephant 'Jumbo', and rivaling it as a 'scoop' in attractions was his procurement of the traditional Wild Man from Borneo."

#### June 13, 1914

Thursday evening of last week visiting with half a dozen friends, a stranger stepped up and inquired if there was anyone in the party that knew a man by the name of Dave Watt. He said he had traveled with him many years ago with the Forepaugh show and at that time, if he remembered rightly, he made Janesville, Wisconsin his home.

One of the party spoke up and said, "Yes, Mr. Watt is in the party, but unfortunately his eyesight is bad and he probably does not know you."

This man was W. K. Peck, general agent of the Al G. Barnes animal show of California. His inquiring for me was a joke, for he knew me in a minute and thought, of course, I would know him. But it had been twenty-four years since I had seen Will Peck and time, coupled with bad eyesight, had brought too much of a change, and I could not place him for a few minutes.

Will Peck for many years was manager of advertising car No. 1 of the Forepaugh show and had charge of twenty-two men. Peck was one of the particular kind; every contract had to be just so, and if anything out of the ordinary came up, his explanation would be long and to the point. For many years around the Adam Forepaugh show Will Peck was known as "Exactly" Peck for the reason that in all his work everything had to be exactly so.

One winter he hired a young man from his own town who had just finished school for one of his bill posters. The young man evidently thought that most of the time he could ride with his head out of the car window viewing the country, but when it came to being called at 4:30 in the morning, eating an early breakfast and starting on a forty or possibly a forty-five mile route, billing the country at every four corners, possibly dinner at 12 o'clock and maybe not until 2, sometimes having to eat a cold lunch and waiting for supper until he could get back into town which sometimes would be 7 or 8 o'clock in the evening, and then would have to go to the car and check up with the bookkeeper and show exactly the number of bills he had put up or the number of lithographs he had distributed and the exact location, things proved very different to the young man's expectations, and it was not long before he told Mr. Peck that the work was not to his liking, that he had been used to having his meals regularly, and the day's work was too long.

Mr. Peck said to him, "Young man, I think, myself, that work in a bank where you could get through at 3

o'clock in the afternoon would be more to your liking, and this kind of work is no picnic, but plenty of hard work and long hours."

The young man had earned enough money to carry him back to his home town and the few weeks he had put in with the circus was all the experience of that kind that he cared for. A job like this in the advance of a big show is no harder than many of those back with the show where the average young man starts in the business with the idea that there is nothing to do but listen to the band play.

Will Peck told me a story that had happened to him in the South. There was a good sized barn standing near where their advertising car was side-tracked in a small town, and he noticed that there had been circus bills on the barn before. So he called at the house, and when the lady came to the door, Mr. Peck asked her if he could place some circus bills on the barn again and that he would give her some tickets for the show.

"No," she said, "I could not let you place any more bills on the barn. You know mother died only a few weeks ago and one of her last requests was that there would never be any more circus bills placed on the barn."

W. K. Peck, long time Al. G. Barnes Circus agent. Pfening Archives.



Many years ago while traveling through the South, the bill posters came across a small building out in the country near the four corners of the road and noticed that there had been circus bills put up there before, and as there was no house near the place and it was a small old building, they concluded to put circus bills on both sides of the little structure which they thought might possibly be a school house for colored people. When the show exhibited in a town not so far away along in the afternoon a colored minister appeared with an officer and demanded \$10 for covering one side of his church with circus bills. This Mr. Forepaugh had to pay and told him that he regretted very much that his men put circus bills on



the side of his church. The following day the same minister with another officer came and asked for \$10 more.

When Mr. Forepaugh tried to explain to him that he had paid him \$10 the day before for the same church, the colored man said, "Yes, boss, dat's right, dat's right; you did pay me \$10 yesterday, but you see dis church is located 'actly on de county line. Half dis church you paid me for yesterday was in Bolden Green county, and de half what you am paying me for today is in Bourbon county. Dis church of mine stands 'actly on de line."

Mr. Forepaugh with a smile on his face paid the second \$10 and told the reverend gentleman that in his receipt he wanted him to include both ends of the church. It is safe to say after this experience the bill posters ahead were given to understand that if they ever put bills on any kind of a building after that without permission from someone in authority that it would be charged up to them.

On one occasion one of the big shows brought suit against another big one for covering their paper. The damage set forth in the complaint was \$50,000, and, to be candid, they had the goods and things looked a little dangerous so something had to be done. As the old saying goes, everything is fair in war, so here's how the defendants wiggled out of the whole affair. They told their bill posters they must get hold of some of the other show's paper, dates, etc., and cover some of their own stands with the opposition paper. But how were they to get hold of the opposition paper? Here is the way they did it. Burglarized an express office where some of the other paper was waiting for the advance of the show that had brought suit, carefully undid the packages containing dates and pictorial paper and took these out and covered some of their own paper. Then, after getting their witnesses, they brought suit for \$74,000, and this brought about a compromise. I could tell you of thousands of such

capers, but just mention this one to show the carnival people what things were done in the past by big circuses.

As many stories have appeared in different newspapers in the country regarding the loss of property by the Ringling show in Cleveland, O. a few days ago, and many being exaggerated, a letter written by the press agent giving a detailed account will prove interesting: "After the fire which laid low the lumbering district of Cleveland, it was found that the Ringling Bros., who played that city Monday and Tuesday, May 26 and 27, had sustained a loss of forty-three cars consisting of twenty-three flat, nineteen stock and one baggage car, which contained the extra twenty-five reserve white tops, the

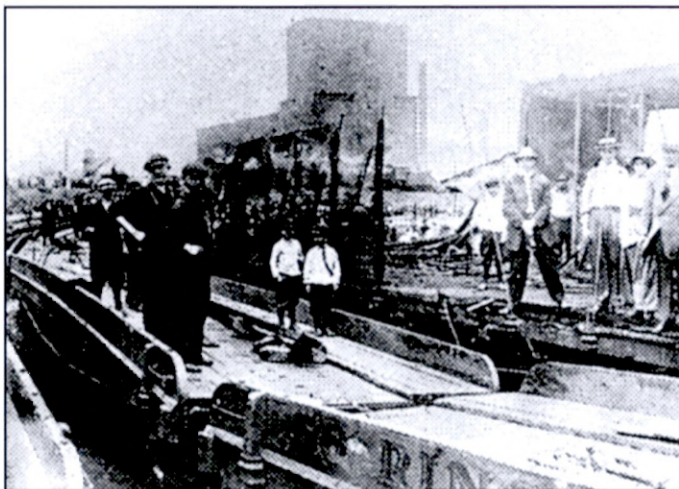
show at this stand. The remainder of the lost cars were temporarily replaced by the New York Central over which line the move was made to the next stand Marion, O.—100 miles distant, without any delay.

"The conflagration started in a lumber yard on the banks of the Cuyahoga river at about 9 p.m., but was not discovered until a half hour later after gaining considerable headway. About the first one to note the blaze, which was easily half a mile distant from the lot on which the circus and its side shows were encamped, was Romeo Jenkins who had pitched his independent menagerie on a street not far from the Ringling lot. While he was 'bally-hooing' for his frame-up, 'Birds and

Wild Animals,' he happened to peek through the curtain of his entrance and discovered the sky reddening at an alarming rate. The wind, however, was blowing the other way, and he realized there was very little immediate danger of any canvas catching fire from the flying pieces which were carried high in the air and therefore decided to stand pat. The hangers-on in front of both his show and the Ringling tops also noticed the reddening of the sky and leisurely walked away from the amusement zone.

"At this point Freddie and Charlie Thompson, who had detected the glare beyond the intervening hill, decided that for safety sake lest the crowd become panicky (and there were 13,500 people watching the show at this time), that word be passed among the performers, ushers, ticket taker, canvasmen and other employees that no news of the fire be given out, and Warrell was prepared to meet any alarmists with strenuous measures. At this point Ed Norwood took his place at the front and lent his efforts in the same direction.

"Seeing, however, that the big blaze was spreading, and despite the hill which lay between, that the fire might at any time spread their way because of the high wind which



The Ringling Bros. train fire in Cleveland, Ohio. Pfening Archives.

duplicate poles and stakes. In all, the loss represents in round figures some \$65,000. Contrary to early reports, no elephant cars were damaged as they happened to be grouped with the Pullman sleepers in a siding remote from the fire belt.

"Long distance connection was established with the Barnum, show which was playing at Buffalo, also with the Arms Palace Car Co., from which were secured respectively six and eight flat cars. Frank Spellman, whose circus was making a week's stand in that vicinity, promptly showed his fraternalism and showmanship by visiting the lot early Tuesday morning and offering nine of his cars to Al Ringling who happened to be the only brother with the



seemed to shift playfully, Warrell passed word to John R. Agee to blow his whistle before the hippodrome races and pave the way for an announcement by Lew Graham to the effect that the big show was now over owing to the fact that the circus had to pack up early in order to play its next stand many miles away.

"This foresight on the part of Warrell undoubtedly saved several thousand lives, and though the audience as it filed out showed evidence of displeasure at the curtailment of the program, nevertheless as soon as they got beyond the white tops and saw the sky and the many sparks that were drifting over the city, thanks were expressed to the Ringling management for its precaution. In the meantime, Al Ringling had dispatched Charlie Thompson to the scene of the fire to report concerning that part of the train which was in danger.

"It so happened that the New York Central at the beginning of the fire had summoned every available engine for the purpose of drawing their cars from the threatened district, and though Thompson discovered that several flats had caught fire, it nevertheless looked as though there would not be much loss of railroad property sustained. Unfortunately, however, as Ottakar Bartik, who after the completion of the ballet had strolled over to watch the fire, put it, all avenues of escape for the cars were cut off by the pipes of hose which the firemen extended across the tracks. Even at that, however, the train seemed in no apparent danger as long as the wind did not shift in an opposite direction to what it had been blowing all during the blaze.

"Al Ringling, Fred Warrell, Charlie Thompson and Eddie Norwood rendered such services as were necessary in a crisis of this kind and saw to it that the move to Marion would be made without absolutely any loss of time. Norwood, the press man at this stand, also used the loss to good publicity advantage. About 3 o'clock in the morning the first two mentioned decided that nothing more could be done, and after a meal repaired to their sleeping cars.

"Charlie Rooney and his assistant hostler, Frank Diller, deserve special

mention for the manner in which they cared for the horses during this period of peril; likewise Deafy Denman who removed the elephants up an alley until they had grown accustomed to the glare of the sky. Then he returned them to a safe location on the lot. These are exactly the facts, and the stories carried in the syndicated press throughout the country were gross exaggerations. No loss of life on the part of the circus employees was sustained, nor was there a single casualty among the animals. But the Ringling management deserve credit for the successful managing of life and stock preservation."

#### June 20, 1914

A few days ago I met an old gentleman on the street whose white hair would indicate that he had seen many winters; and with a smile on his face, he shook hands with me and called me by name, saying, "I have known you by sight for many years although you probably do not know who I am. Well," he said, "I am a plain Scotchman and own a farm out east of Janesville on Rock Prairie.



Gottleib G. Gollmar, father of the Gollmar brothers. Sandy Gollmar Edwards collection.

"Well," I said, "You have my sympathy in your double affliction."

"No" said he, "I don't need any of that, but I wanted to tell you why I am enjoying your articles on show life. I never miss reading one and they carry me back to my boyhood days in Scotland, and oh dear, just think of it, that it is well nigh sixty

years ago. Did you ever hear about Harry Wambold's circus in Europe?"

When I assured him that I had heard much of the Wambolds and that some of the younger of them had come to America where they had been prominent with shows, the old gentleman was more than interested.

"It was when I was no more than eight or nine years of age that Harry Wambold's circus showed in the town in Scotland near where my people lived. But they were poor and could not afford to give me money for the show, so I started out to find a job where I could earn a sixpence, for that was the admission fee for boys, and I must go to the circus," said the old gentleman.

"I asked a farmer living near my people if he did not have some work for me, that I wanted to earn the price of a ticket to the show. He told me that if I would weed a half acre of turnips that he would give me the price of a ticket. I took the job and worked from early in the morning until eight in the evening and finally finished and received my money. The following day I walked some miles to the town to see the show. Just think of the difference today. The boys of today not only want the ticket, but two or three times the price of it for spending money; and in place of walking many miles barefooted, they are dressed in their best and taken to the door of the circus in an automobile.

"Yet I think I got as much pleasure out of my first circus as any boy ever did, and it left an impression on my mind that I shall never forget. When you come to think it is impossible to see everything in the great shows of today for 50 cents. It is certainly a large package for your money."

On Friday morning, June 5, at about 8 o'clock, death came and relieved the suffering of G. G. Gollmar at his home on Birch street in Baraboo, Wis. This has been the home of the Gollmar family for about sixty years and there are few people in the country who did not know Mr. Gollmar, as he had been prominent in the business affairs of Baraboo and surrounding country since 1851. He was the father of the Gollmar brothers, the famous circus men, and



at their opening in Baraboo early in May, although feeble at the time, he was able to stand on the verandah of his home and watch the parade made by his sons' circus. A few days ago I was sent a copy of the Baraboo *Daily News* which contained a picture of Mr. Gollmar and a detailed write-up of his early career in that city.

Mr. Gollmar lived a long life. He was born in Meinigen, Wittenburg, Germany, Dec. 13, 1823, and came to America with his parents when but a small boy. There were nine families in the party which immigrated and all endured many privations. When they located in Cleveland, O., Mr. Gollmar's father purchased a small farm about twenty-four miles from Cleveland and on this the family resided.

When a young man Mr. Gollmar drove on the same canal with James A. Garfield, who afterwards became president of the United States. Often they met and passed the time of day. Later he became a blacksmith, married Miss Mary Magdalene Juliar in Chicago in 1847 and arrived in Baraboo in 1851. They made the journey from Chicago by team, being entertained at the Baraboo house on the south side of the river. The part of the village on the north side was then called Adams. When they arrived in Baraboo they purchased the land on Birch street on which they have since resided. They bought a little house sixteen feet square from James Maxwell, moved it upon the lots, and this was their first home there.

Mr. Gollmar opened a blacksmith shop and shod many cattle, at that early date oxen being extensively used by the pioneer settlers. The price for shoeing a yoke of cattle was \$5, the shoes and nails being made by the blacksmith by hand from the rough iron. For shoeing horses the price was three shillings, or 37-1/2 cents, per shoe and one shilling for resetting. Charcoal was used instead of coal by the blacksmith, and this cost from 5 to 15 cents a bushel. Mr. Gollmar was in business for many years.

Mr. Gollmar was the last charter member of the Baraboo Masonic lodge which was organized Nov. 6, 1851. The funeral was held Sunday

afternoon at 2:30 o'clock from the home, under the auspices of the Masonic order, Rev. E. C. Henke conducting the service.

Speaking of the Hagenbeck-Wallace show which will exhibit here next Wednesday, I have known Uncle Ben Wallace, as he is called around the show, for many years, and it was only a few days after the great flood that swept away much of his show and entailed a loss of many thousand dollars, that Uncle Ben sat down and wrote me a letter giving me the full particulars, but wound up by saying the show would be rebuilt and started out on time and grander than ever. So that while he lost many thousands of dollars worth of property, he did not lose courage.

Some of the great film companies of the country today are making inroads on the circus business even to the extent of importing animals for the moving picture films. Last week William N. Selig received from India some distinctive additions for his wonderful wild animal show, the principals being four royal Bengal tigers of the finest type and a pair of black leopards from the Himalayas. Quite a group of animals was collected for the Selig Polyscope company in Calcutta and embarked from that point about six weeks ago. The black leopards are albinos of the negative type known as "freaks," and are therefore considered rare specimens.

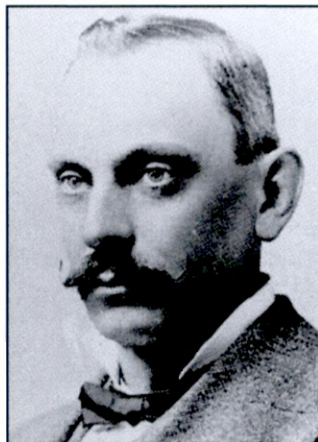
#### June 27, 1914

For the first time since I have been out and away from the business I got the fever and soon made up my mind that I wanted to see another great show arrive in town and watch them unload. So I left an early call and before sunrise I found myself with hundreds of other curious people on my way to the Five Points where the Hagenbeck-Wallace show was to unload and the Five Points, as they are called, were not too many for the crowds were coming in from every street.

One of the first men to meet me a little after 5 o'clock was a farmer I did not know. He said that he lived ten miles west and got an early start for they were all anxious to see a big circus arrive in town and watch them unload. While it was a long way for many of the early comers, they were a good natured crowd and every few minutes somebody in the crowd would yell, "There they come." But it was a few minutes after 7 o'clock before section No. 1 of the great show came in sight.

It was only a few minutes later until the big runs were lowered and put in shape, and the work of lowering the wagons to the street was begun. The first five wagons unloaded were four of which were known as the cook tent and the water wagon which supplies the water for the great circus hotel.

Jake Posey, well known hostler. Pfening Archives.



"Buggy" Stumpf, the master of transportation, stood close to the runs and was directing the work in a quiet manner

as but few men in the business could do. Mr. Stumpf has been in charge of this work for some years. His men are all fast workers and in a case like Wednesday, when the show arrives late in town, everything moves about him like clockwork.

Jeff [Jake] Posey, boss hostler, was directing the teams, and in less than five minutes the big wagons were on their way to the driving park. It was just twenty-five minutes after the big wagons with the steam ranges were landed on the show grounds that the big bell announced that breakfast was ready. This was certainly fast work for a big institution like this where nearly 1,000 people were to be served breakfast.

James Davis, manager of the big circus hotel, told me that many times in case of a rush he had announced breakfast all ready in twenty minutes after arriving on the grounds. The system in every department of a great show like the Hagenbeck-Wallace is the only thing that



makes such work possible. The one thing in show business that always impressed me was how one of the great shows could build up its city of tents, give two performances, wreck them, load them all onto the different trains and run 100 miles and rebuild them the next day without ever losing a stake.

Early in the day I was taken in charge by A. B. Jones, the press agent of the show, and given many pointers as to the feature acts of the show and the business they had been doing up to date. The business, he said, had been very satisfactory, and the impression they had left in the different cities in which they had shown had been a good one. But there was a one man act that had been a feature with the Wallace show that I missed and that was the familiar face of Uncle Ben Wallace, the owner and manager of the Wallace show for so many years.

Uncle Ben, as he is known around the show, always had time to visit with an old friend, and his kind manner always left a good impression. Mr. Wallace retired from the business more than a year ago with what the general public would consider more than his share of this world's goods.

In his home town of Peru, Indiana, he is the one big man in the business interests that go to build up a city. He is a large stockholder in one of Peru's big factories, owns a large amount of stock in a big department and only a short time ago built Peru a beautiful new theatre, and in the Wabash valley of Illinois owns more than 3,000 acres of the finest farming land in Illinois.

As Mr. Wallace is hanging around the seventy mark, he felt as though he had done his share of hard work and retired from the business more than a year ago. Now the management of the show is looked after by C. E. Corey, who is a relative of Mr. Wallace and lives in a fine home across the street from Mr. Wallace in Peru.

Mr. Corey was manager of the show for Mr. Wallace for many years before Mr. Wallace retired and it is certain that he knows everything about the

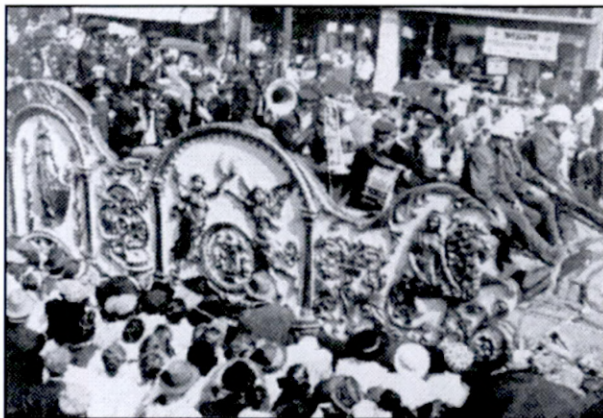
show from the largest wagon to the smallest stake.

J. O. Talbot, whose home is in Denver, Colo., is the acting manager at the main entrance and has entire charge of the front of the show. The force in the ticket wagon is looked after by the following gentlemen: John Andres, ticket seller; Harry Sarig, stenographer and Frank Neethan, auditor. George Wambold, the boss canvasman, has been with the show for many years and has the reputation of being as good a hustler as there is in the business in case of a storm when everything has to be done in a hurry.

I met many show friends with the show, among them W. C. Morgan, known in the business as Judge Morgan, who has been in the business for some years. He was with the Louella Forepaugh-Fish show that was in Janesville in 1903. Morgan was also one of the managers of the Cummins Wild West show which toured Europe some years ago.

Also Bert Cole, who has his own unique way of acting. His father, George S. Cole, in '79 was with the Burr Robbins show and spent some time in Janesville. Robert Stickney, Jr., whose father was a famous rider in the business; also his wife, who was Laura DeMott, her father, James DeMott and her sister, Josie, were riders with the Burr Robbins show in the middle seventies. Bud Gorman is the equestrian director, and there is no better in the business than Mr. Gorman, for it is a known fact in the business that whenever Bud Gorman is equestrian director there

The Hagenbeck-Wallace No. 1 bandwagon in 1914. Pfening Archives.



is no waiting. All of the acts must pass at the ring bank. This means that when one act is going out of the ring, the other is coining in.

Another gentleman with the show who certainly had one of the feature acts was John White, owner and trainer of the dancing mule. John insists that he and his mule can dance anything that the band can play, and he certainly made a hit with the great crowds. The average circus going public ask the questions, "Are those lions or tigers? Are they really ferocious animals, or are they trained to act in that way?" Some of the animals work faster than others and the more stubborn ones have to be whipped into submission. The public often think that if they were really ferocious animals, the trainers would not last long.

The show is working its way west and today they show in Clinton, Ia., and will put in nearly all the month of July in that state. There is one thing certain, that no circus ever visited Janesville that left a better impression than did the Hagenbeck-Wallace show, and certainly came as near giving an all feature show at Janesville as ever was seen. The one great feature of the show were the trained Hagenbeck animals, which have always been of the highest class. But who would want to be a lion tamer? As for me, I would rather be a conductor on an airplane, for as a rule, people who follow that line of work seldom live to die of old age.

#### July 4, 1914

On Wednesday night of June 24 at the Five Points when most of the wagons of the Hagenbeck-Wallace shows had been loaded onto the flat cars, there was an old man interesting a small crowd of the bystanders by giving them something of the history of his life in the business. This man came to Janesville in 1875 to join the Burr Robbins Show. He hired out to Delavan, the boss hostler, and his work was to drive a pair of mules over the road on a large cage, and on account of his work, he was christened Mulesy.



For thirty-nine years with all the different shows that he had traveled with, he has been known only as Mulesy, and appears on the payroll under that name. While he has only traveled with three different shows, he has never missed a season since joining out with the Burr Robbins show thirty-nine years ago. I don't think that twice the money that he received for his work with the show would be any temptation for Mulesy to quit the business and go to work on a farm, although the work might be much easier and shorter hours.

To his crowd of interested listeners, Mulesy was bemoaning the fact that he had not met his old friend, Dave Watt. He said that he was one of the first men that he knew in the business that "always had been nice to me; and when I would get broke between salary days, he would always stake me to a dollar to tide me over. And I never thought that I would visit Janesville with a show and not see Mr. Watt."

I should certainly have enjoyed a visit with the old man. While one pair of mules seemed to be his limit to handle, he was a man that never drank, was always reliable, and as a rule, stays with the show the year around, for there is always something to do for a reliable man like him in the winter quarters. He has been with the Wallace show for twenty years and for many years back has driven a large pair of mules on the water wagon. Mulesy boasts of the fact that he is the only man that he knows who climbed on the water wagon twenty years ago and is still there. As a rule, a man of his kind is kept by the show the year around, for while they are not high class drivers of long teams, they are capable as far as they go, and the manager always knows where to find them.

Al Moore, the clown, had several friends in Janesville, and during the evening performance several "Hello, Al's" came from the reserved seats. And others said, that you, A. W. This they thought would annoy him, but not Al. He was always there with an answer, and speaking of clowns, he is one of the classy ones in the business. It is he that plays a baseball game and represents the entire team. When Al first introduced this, it

made one of the hits of the country and soon placed him in the front ranks as a clown.

A few days ago there appeared in a certain newspaper an article written by a supposed newspaper representative of the Ringling show, part of which I will give you in this article. In this article the man of supposed knowledge of the business in his description of the great shows and the men who own them, juggles with millions of dollars as though they were children's toys. He never stopped for a moment to think that it is only a few years back that not even the largest shows of the country would take in a million dollars during an entire season. The following article is only a part of the work of the overzealous press agent.

"For the circus business of America is the Ringling business.

"They own the Ringling Brothers show, the Bamum's, which was later Barnum and Bailey's, the Forepaugh-Sells shows and what is left of Buffalo Bill's and Pawnee Bill's Wild West and Ranch '101,' [not true] and oh, lots and lots of other shows.

"And they are the boys who started in the barn loft at Baraboo, Wis.

"They are the 'circus trust of America.'

"The chances are that the government never will complain because the Ringling boys (for they always will be boys, no matter how old they get) are a 'trust.' They own lots and lots of circuses, but many of them they bought when they did not need or want them, out of sentiment when some of the competitors of the days when they rode in wagons were in hard luck.

"Some they bought because they wanted to preserve the names of the famous old 'shows.'

"Some they bought so that they might direct the routes and send some circus to some city or town their 'big shows' could not reach. Some they wanted because from them they could get new acts and new performers for the 'big shows,' and some they own because when the



public has ceased to thrill over some famous 'actor' in the big shows, they can send him to the smaller ones where he may perform before those who never have felt the thrills.

"There is too much sentiment in the circus business for it to be a

destroyer or a menace. The Ringlings have bought shows, carried them, supplied them with acts and given the old owner full charge and better territory with the chance to buy them back and run them.

"Just how many men and women, horses and dogs these boys own now even they themselves do not know exactly.

"A few weeks ago, however, a syndicate proposed to take the shows entire, unite them with some 'independents,' give the Ringlings \$10,000,000 and stock in the new concern, and the boys who started their two pins admission, two pins reserved seat shows in Baraboo, Wis., laughed at them.

"Some idea of the vast expense of creating and maintaining a great circus may be gained from the fact that the Ringling show's menagerie alone is valued and insured at more than \$1,000,000, the forty performing elephants being worth \$250,000. The robe worn by one elephant alone cost \$12,000.

"The length of Ringlings' main tent is 580 feet, the largest ever erected; the menagerie contains 108 cages and the parade is three miles long. The 4,500 costumes worn in the Solomon and the Queen of Sheba spectacle of the Ringling circus cost \$500,000 and the spectacle itself was produced at the cost of more than \$1,000,000 and to present it a ballet of three hundred girls is carried.

"Double these latter figures, for the Barnum shows are about the same size, add one-third for the smaller shows controlled, and you will have some idea of the magnitude of the show business.

"Thirty-three years ago Al, Otto, Alf T., Charlie and John Ringling started the show as a concert troupe with a rag carpet and a paper whale,



an old cornet played by Alf, some bottles and a lamp which Al juggled, John doing Dutch comedy, Charles giving recitations, while Otto got the money.

"After one frail season in halls and barns and vacant store rooms, they bought two horses. Al rode them forty miles. They had a small tent. For ten years they struggled along under canvas as a small 'wagon show.' They then grew large enough to buy cars. By 1900 they had grown so that they were serious competitors of Barnum, Forepaugh and Robinson and ranked with others.

"Those were battling years, for Barnum and Bailey's show was determined to hold its claim to the greatest on earth. The two great circuses fought each other for life, following each other over the same routes. The Ringlings were determined to stamp themselves as the greatest.

"A circus is as individual as its owners. All the great shows of the old days declined when the genius that created them died. Adam Forepaugh had died and the Ringlings bought the Forepaugh-Sells shows to use in the fight with "Jim" Bailey, and when in 1906 Bailey, the last of the great old-time circus men, died, the Ringlings bought the Barnum show and eliminated the last of the serious competitors.

"As it costs \$8,000 a day for 200 days to run each of the shows and perhaps \$5,000 more to operate the smaller ones, and they average about 300 days a season, you may figure easily that the American people must pay over \$4,000,000 into the box office before the Ringlings can begin to take interest on their investment and count profit.

"I went marketing with the steward of the Ringling shows when he ordered his supplies for one day. This is what he ordered: Four thousand five hundred pounds fresh beef, 300 dozen eggs, 800 pounds of bread, 150 pounds of butter, 25 bushels potatoes, 12 bushels other vegetables, 150 pounds crackers, 25 pounds tea, 150 pounds coffee, 500 pounds sugar, 12 cases canned goods, 100 pounds lard, 2 barrels flour, 70 gallons of milk, 5 cases of canned milk, 30 gallon cans of fruit, 100 packages of

breakfast food and half a wagon load of the incidentals of cooking.

"To feed the horses, dogs, elephants and other animals he ordered 10 tons of hay, 5 tons of straw, 300 bushels of oats, 750 pounds of raw meats and other smaller items.

"There are more than a dozen races represented among the performers. There are Spaniards, Chinese, Japanese, Javanese, Austrians, French, Germans, Indians, East Indians, Balkans.

"Of the five brothers who started, Otto is dead and his portion of the Ringling shows he left to Henry, a young brother, so they will still be the five Ringling Brothers."

#### July 11, 1914

In the late fifty's or early sixty's there were two young men living with their parents on farms in western Iowa, which at that time was considered a part of what was known as the frontier. These young men's names were Will Cody and Will Matheson. At this time the government was calling for volunteers to fight the Indians on the frontier. These two men enlisted, and until long after the close of the Civil War these boys were well to the front in many of the fights with the Indians in the far west. Some years later Will Matheson settled in Wichita, Kansas, and Will Cody soon became famous all over the world as Buffalo Bill. Although his work took him all over the country, the friendship -which started when they were boys on the farm in the west of Iowa never waned, and in all these years they kept up a correspondence.

About two weeks after the Sells-Floto and Buffalo Bill shows exhibited in Wichita, Kansas, the home of Bill Matheson, as he is known in his home town, Mr.

Matheson gave a banquet for his old friend Cody at which there were many prominent people invited and they all had the one time of their lives in listening to the experiences of the two men in their boyhood days. When men like these are well past their three score years and ten, it is meetings of this kind and the stories of yesterday, that carry them back to their boyhood days and makes them interesting characters to meet and listen to their stories of hardships in the early days.

Last Monday the Ringling show gave two performances in Madison, Wis., and everyone connected with the show said it was one of the hard days of the season. The excessive heat and the long haul from the railroad yards to the lot and the long parade and the large crowds kept everyone with the show busy all day, and in fact, nearly all night.

In the afternoon the doors were closed and more than 1,000 people were turned away, and at night every seat in the show was taken. It was not until almost daylight in the morning that the last section of the great show was on the cars and pulled out for the next town. So that you can readily see that there is something to do around the big circuses besides listen to the band play.

It has not been all clear sailing for the Ringling show this season. The loss of forty cars at Cleveland a few weeks ago, and only two weeks later a railroad accident where two sleepers left the rails and were turned over. While no one was killed, there were twelve people injured seriously who had to be sent to the hospital. And yet the great show fills its days, the band plays and but little of their trials and troubles are known to the general public.

Caught unawares in a tornado which swept over Southern Minnesota Tuesday evening and did damage estimated at half a million dollars, the big top of the John H. Sparks Shows was wrecked at Redwood Falls, Minnesota. The clouds hung low in the northwest for several hours and appeared to be shifting to the east. The doors were opened and a crowd of 600 people filled one side of the tent. When the





performance was about half over, the storm struck, and although an effort was made by Manager Chas. Sparks to hurry the people out, the tent was being torn to shreds and the quarter poles and center poles beaten about in the air before the audience could reach the door. As far as could be learned, only one person met with any mishap. The big top was tom to ribbons and the performers' dressing top completely destroyed. The performers also lost most of their street wardrobe while the band had its instruments damaged to a great extent. In order to reach the sleepers, clothes were furnished the performers by neighbors in the vicinity. Jack Phillips, bandmaster, lost his big show program while Waiter Guice, in trying to get his horses out of the pad room was struck over the head by a flying pole and slightly injured. The sideshow and menagerie were not damaged. The lot is in a bad location on a hilltop, but the town itself suffered much damage. The remnants of the show were packed up, and just before daylight the train pulled out for Springfield, Minn.

That the famous Wild West shows of America are appreciated in Europe as well as in this country will be seen by the following: 101 Ranch entertained England's Queen and the Empress of Russia last Thursday. Queen Alexandra and her sister, Empress Marie of

Russia, and their party occupying four automobiles, visited the 101 Ranch Show Thursday afternoon. Accompanying their Majesties were the Princess Royal, Princess Maud, Honorable Violet Vivian, Countess of Antrim, Colonel Streatveld, Prince Cher-vachidze, Countess Mengden, General Sir Dighton Probyri and Honorable Charlotte Knollys. The party was received at the Stadium entrance by Lord Lensdale and Sir John Cockburn. Their majesties stayed for the entire performance lasting from 3 to 5:30 and expressed their approval with great interest and applause. Queen Alexandra took many photographs of the proceedings and also requested that an entire set of photographs of the performers be forwarded to her to be added to her collection. Empress Marie told Mr. Miller and Louis Cooke that the

show would go great in Russia. The entire royal party reviewed the line-up of the whole company after the performance.

When Mme. Adgie Castillo, an animal performer, had learned of the fate of her fiancée, Emerson D. Dietrich, who was killed by her trained lions recently in Chicago, she called Cy De Vry, a friend of hers and the animal trainer at Lincoln park, and went to the scene. Seizing a two-pronged iron fork, she inserted it between the bars in an effort to punish the lions by prodding them as they stalked to the front of the cage. De Vry called to her and told her not to do that. Failing to obey, De Vry seized her by the arm and by a narrow escape dragged her to safety. The remains of Dietrich were ordered shipped to Brooklyn, N. Y. where his parents reside.



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